RG VEDIC STUDIES

SERIES V

SOUND–NĀDA

M. SUNDAR RAJ

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International Society for the
Investigation of Ancient Civilizations

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गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय

विषय संख्या .... आगत नं० ....
लेखक Sundarraj, M.
शीर्षक Vedic Studies.

दिनांक	सदस्य संख्या	दिनांक	सदस्य संख्या

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SERIES V

SOUND—NĀDA

'In the beginning was the word; and the Word was with God, and the Word became God.'

(*New Testament*).

'Then cold and hot and moist and dry.
In order to their stations leap,
and Musicś Powers obey;

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began:
From harmony to harmony

Through all the compass of the notes it ran

The diapason closing full in Man'.

('*A Song for St. Ceciliaś Day*' *Dryden*).

'Nādāntcna yadā viśvam āpūrayati tadā Nāda ityucyate"

When (śakti) fills up the whole universe with Nādāntā, (Universal Sound) then she is called Nāda.

TO MY MOTHER

PREFACE

It is agreed by all authorities that the text of the Rg. Veda as we have it today is by the most conservative estimate, not less than 3,500 years old, and that it is a complication of verses some at least of which must have been composed many centuries before that date. It is the most ancient extant living text, and it is the most sacred of the scriptures in Hinduism. In the last two or three centuries, it has attracted the respectful and profound admiration of many leading intellectuals of Western Europe.

But for all that, its contents remain still a deep mystery. For two centuries, it has received an exhaustive scrutiny at the hands of many great scholars in Europe ; at home, the traditional commentary of Sāyana still holds sway. Many are the interpretations placed upon the verses, but a common agreement has not yet been reached in regard to either the language or the contents. The myths remains unresolved.

The author of the present work has come forward with a new and fresh commentary and exegesis. The merit of his work lies in the fact that he has not sought recourse to any material outside the text itself. Of still greater importance is the fact that he has covered the entire text with a view to presenting a comprehensive and coherent view of all the elements in the myths, taking into account the fact that they are to be read at various levels. New suggestions are also put forward to resolve some linguistic problems.

How far the author has succeeded in his efforts to produce an exhaustive and definitive exegesis is for the authorities and scholars in the subject to decide. But all readers of the work will, I am sure, find it a pleasant and instructive readable matter.

It is this which has attracted me to the work and I have, therefore, great pleasure in recommending it to all who are interested in the history of ancient cultures and growth of spiritual life in general, and of Hinduism is particular.

(Reproduced from the First Series).

I am hopeful that the manner of presentation and the contents of this book will evoke further interest in a subject which is of the greatest concern to all lovers of religion and culture, but which till now has had little popular appeal due to want of easily readable works of this type.

N. MAHALINGAM,
Chairman,
International Society
For The Investigation of Ancient
Civilizations

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RG VEDIC STUDIES

INTRODUCTION—GENERAL

In the words of Louis Renou, 'the Veda is precisely the sign, perhaps the only one, of Indian Orthodoxy'. ('The Destiny of the Veda in India', p. 2). That, of course, is the theoretical position in Hinduism. In practice, the sign of orthodoxy is the observance of caste injunctions, according to the general principles laid down in Manu's Dharma Sastra, and the very detailed codes of conduct built upon that text by social practices developed over centuries. However, it is to the Veda that Hindu theology turns for the legitimising authority for these practices, and Louis Renou is therefore, perfectly right.

Hindu orthodoxy is not confined to the upper classes only. It even extends to Harijans, the former Untouchables. The 'holier than thou' air which orthodoxy always breeds the world over is all-pervasive in Hinduism.

Louis Renou has only stated what has always been the core of disputation, and in many cases the only point of disagreement, not only between the brahmins, the mentors of orthodox Hinduism, on the one hand, and the Jains, the Buddhists and the Ājivikas on the other, but also within Hindu fold itself, whenever and wherever the Bhakti and Śakti sects had made their appearance.

The Bhakti and Sakti sects always started as caste-levellers, and bhakti has been, till recently, the only attempt at reformation in Hindu Society. However, it aimed only at socio-religious reform. Ideas of a socio-economic reform have always been foreign to the Hindu mind and was never even contemplated in all the history of Hinduism prior to the last three decades. But a successful socio-religious reform can well turn out to be a precursor to socio-economic changes. The obstacles that Bhakti encountered, therefore, stemmed not only from the obvious differences in religious concepts but also from the deep underlying threat to economic interests, the real potent factor. All Bhakti movements

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ultimately ended up by becoming merely the same old Hinduism with all the paraphernalia of caste. The only change effected was the appeal to the Veda as legitimising authority. But this became minimal in some of the more staunch sects, whilst amongst the less zealous ones the authority of the Vedas was fully restored with the result that most bhakti sects—not all, such as the Lingayats —became a part and parcel of orthodox Hinduism. Many of the non-bhakti movements such as the Sānkhya, which started with opposition to the fundamental concepts of Vedism, also finally ended up with a similar fate of absorption into the orthodox schools

How was Hinduism able to so successfully ward off all challenges, not only to its socio-religious and economic institutions, but even to its conservative and orthodox religious concepts ? This is the most fascinating question that faces intellectuals who approach the history of Hindu religion in an analytical spirit. (Such a critical study, however, does not call for a total renunciation of it spiritual message when seen at the best, an unimaginable paradox that cannot hold true with respect to any other religion.) Until recent times, Hinduism had very rarely to resort to violence to root out rebels within its fold. It merely talked them out.

The magic word ' Veda ' has been the most powerful, if not the only, weapon in the armoury of orthodox Hinduism. Though Renou's analysis is substantially correct, his general remark, namely: ' Even in the most orthodox domains, the reverence to the Vedas has come to be a simple ' raising of the hat ' in passing, to an idol by which one no longer intends to be encumbered later on ' (p. 2, op-cit.) may, however, create a wrong impression. The fact is, the Defenders of the Faith do not just treat the Veda as ' an idol, to which the hat is to be raised in passing ', but as a weapon of warfare, in intellectual struggle, and also even more powerfully and successfully in psychological brain-washing. (Hindus realised centuries before any others, the superiority of psychological to physical or even intellectual methods in warfare.)

Whoever compiled—that is redacted—the Veda, some 3500 or 4000 years ago, left it in a very convenient form for his successors. The compulsions leading to this result were no doubt historical and social, but he—or perhaps they—saw to it that in the final compilation, each of the four vedas, namely, the Rg, the Yajur, the Sāma and the Atharva, were put in four sections, called the Samhita, the Brāhmana, the Āranyaka, and the Upaniṣads. This was eminently a wise thing to do, though it created a logical paradox in that the four sections have basically nothing in common with one another. (If there is anything common between them at all, it may be traced to those elements which completely dominate the Upanisads.) Some of these elements do make their appearance in the speculative portions which constitute comparatively a minor, but dinstinctly separate, sections of the mantrā. But the dominating elements in the Samhita, in spite of this, remain mythological. (It must, however, be remembered that the Upanisads themselves are highly eclectic.) However, the redactors were not concerned with logic, but with the differing practical requirements of the historians, mythologists, ritualists, legalists and the philosophers amongst them. By keeping the sections dealing with their respective subjects properly arranged, everyone was satisfied, and each could utilise that portion of it which he found useful to himself without coming into clash with others. The Vedas have thus come to be all things to all men.

The philosophers revelled in the Upaniṣads, and the ritualists and law-givers found sufficient and satisfying material in the Yajur Veda, the Sāma Veda and the Brāhmanas. The shaman had his Atharva Veda, but no one at first knew what to do with the Rg. Veda. Half-hearted attempts were made to use bits and pieces of it in the sacrificial rites, and the Sāma Veda borrowed from it practically entirely, all in a rather mechanical way. But even this limited use of the Rg. Veda ceased when the Vedic sacrificial religion was replaced by the Āgamic, leaving the former to the small band of hard-core Mimāṁsic brahmins to occasionally practise it in their rituals. For the rest of the time they learnt the relevant texts by rote, and then conducted endless disputations about them in a manner entirely satisfactory to themselves.

Long before the advent of Buddha, the brahminical conscience had shown signs of being troubled by the anomalous state of the Rg Veda, by its inconsistencies, and by the unintelligibility of not only the myths, but even of common words and passages. This we know from Yāska. But with Buddha, the bull really entered the China shop. First to beat the retreat was the sacrificial religion, which found sympathisers only among the mimāṁsics, convert as well as overt. The Upaniṣadic philosophers, on the other hand, had so much in common with Buddha and his followers of both Mahāyāna and Hīnāyana sects (the eclectic nature of the Upaniṣads making it possible to accommodate all types of metaphysical thinking) that it appeared at first as if the two philosophical schools of Buddhism and Hinduism would merge. This development posed the threat of ultimate loss of identity of the latter, the most severely affected victim of which would have been caste concepts and institutions. This would naturally have later on led to the socio-economic institutions also being affected, and social power passing from the hands of the brahminical elite.

Buddha never expressed himself strongly against caste or the Veda, but his teachings in the hands of his followers made explicit what was only implicit in his message. Caste and the Veda were in danger from the Buddhists, who produced in due course intellectual giants, such as Buddha Ghosha, and Nāgārjuna, many of them being converts from the brahminical community, which was becoming slowly eroded.

The danger could not be averted by physical violence. Though violence was resorted to not infrequently by the leaders of orthodoxy, it became evident that the breakdown of a peaceful atmosphere and the disturbance of peace would only redound to their disadvantage.

Necessarily, therefore, recourse was taken to polemics in philosophy, which for the orthodox community meant teachings of the Upaniṣads. First, however, Hinduism itself had to close its ranks, and forge a common base for its various schools, such as the Nyāyā, the Sāṁkhya and so on which differed so vastly amongst themselves.

The first step in realigning the defending forces was the compilation of the Brahma Sūtras which was a gloss upon the Upaniṣads. Bringing together in one text the various concepts gave an appearance of unity to Hindu philosophical thought. Then, some genius composed the Bhagavat Gita. Unlike the Brahma Sūtras whose terse and cryptic style made it difficult reading, the Gita is a piece of beautiful poetry. Moreover, it went further, than the Brahma Sutras in syncretising the various 'darśanas' or schools such as the Sāṁkhya, the Vedanta and so on. The poetic style, and the lack of disputation in its tone has given it a universal appeal, satisfying to all but the most severe and exacting critic.

Even with all this, the coping stone was missing. The main question still remained unanswered. Why should anyone accept the Hindu schools in preference to the Buddhists who preached the same basic philosophical concepts and carried them further to their logical conclusion? If anything, Buddhist humanitarian moral concepts had an edge over Hinduism, and, therefore, a greater appeal to sensitive intellectuals. The Krishna of the Bhagavat Gita stood alone against Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, and the doctrine of the love and peace preached by the latter rang a morally higher sensitive tone than the Gita's call to war even against one's elatives and friends for the sake of 'Kshatriya Dharma', which, in those days, laid emphasis not so much on the protection of the weak and the downtrodden but on the acquisition of power and the expansion of territory. As for 'action for its own sake without regard for the results', both schools taught it, but with this difference that the Buddhist infused it with the doctrine of love, in comparison with which the Hindu concept seems so lacking in humane feelings.

The great threat which Buddhism posed to Hinduism before the coming of Sankara cannot be realized even to a fractional extent today, as the former has practically disappeared from the face of the country. Even before the coming of Sankara, the seeds of decay were apparent in the monasteries of Buddhism, and the final blow to that religion in India was delivered by the Muslims long after Sankara. Nevertheless, it was Sankara who rejuvenated Hinduism at a time when it appeared as if it was lost altogether, and it was he who gave it that impetus and direction which has enabled it to withstand all threats to its life, whether from Islam or Christianity. It now appears that it may be able to withstand even the powerful scientific rational thought of the West, in spite of the gigantic support provided to the latter by the modern Industrial state and economy. Sankara skilfully combined two elements in his strategy. He roped in the high authority commanded by the term, 'Veda', and tied it with Bhakti and Sakti. Subsequent gurus and ācharyas of Hinduism after him have followed him in this respect even when they did not agree with him fully in his concept of the Vedanta. Many bhakti sects have tried to throw off the shackles of the Veda, but never successfully. Even the most extreme of these groups, with rare exceptions, have found it necessary to retain the term.

The ambiguity which cloaks the term ' Veda ' has considerably helped in these efforts. Far from being a handicap, the obscurity in which the Veda is cloaked has been its most powerful weapon. It has endowed it with an air of great sanctity, and deep and profound mysteries. Not knowing what it really contained, its opponents could only beat in the air, and for its proponents, it was magic. Thus it had great psychological value of which Sankara and, after him, all Hindu propagandists took full advantage. It was sheer genius which married bhakti and Sakti to Veda. It conferred legitimacy in Hinduism for the passionate emotionalism of bhakti, and at the same time, placed orthodoxy, with its Veda, at the control of affairs and made it invulnerable to logic, since it was not formulated in rational terms and the concepts were unknown.

What is the 'Veda ' ?

There are three different senses in which the word ' Veda ' is used in Hinduism. The first treats the whole corpus, the four-Samhitaṣ (Rg, Yajur, Sāma, and Atharva) along with all the accompanying Brāhmanas, Aranyakas and Upanisads, as the Veda. To this school every bit of these texts is a part of the ' Veda ', and no one part is more important than the other. This naturally creates difficulties of logic in their exposition but then faith is more powerful than logic. The second view has only the Upaniṣads in mind, and the third only the Samhitas, taken with or without the Upaniṣads. Hindus, contrary to their general habit in their philosophical debates, scrupulously avoid any precise definition of the term ' Veda '. It is only from the context that one can find out which section is referred to, and the curious picture is often to be seen of the same speaker (or writer) who has appealed at one stage to the ' Veda ' (in general) as his authority, later on stating that some part or other of the text was not acceptable to him.

Amongst all these texts, the one which has always commanded the greatest respect and reverence amongst the Hindus is the Rg

Veda. In the last resort, when any dispute, or difference of opinion arises as to what is the authority for any religious question, and when all other arguments have failed, a simple appeal to 'Veda' suffices to demolish the opponent. If the dispute is over the interpretation of any point in the Upaniṣads the same answer should silence all further discussions, but in this case, the term 'Veda' has to be understood to refer to the Rg Samhita, and no explict statement to this effect is considered necessary. No chapter and verse from that text is expected to be quoted by the disputant, claiming that authority, and if at all a verse is quoted, such as for example, when the Puruṣa Sukta is cited to justify the caste order, it would be a sacrilage to critically analyse it or to question its validity. There the matter ends. The Rg Veda is the court of last resort.

Justice is portrayed sometimes as blind, and as a court of last resort, blindness pervades the Hindu view of the Rg Veda. Yāska's 'Nirukta', a work of the 6th or 7th Cent. B.C., reveals how completely obscure the Rg Veda was to the brahmin intellectual of those times. The problems encountered in interpreting the Rg Veda are very vast. Apart from the problem of language, the innumerable myths and 'aitihāsic' (legendary) references are completely mysterious. There has been till the beginning of the 19th Century (actually till about 170 years ago) only one major work of commentary on the Rg Veda. It came from the pen of Sāyana. (Mahidhara is comparatively less important.) It is a Mimāṁsic work, and for a scholar of that school there is no problem of interpretation, for the meaning of every word lies in itself. Extending that concept, every myth and 'aitihāsic' story is the truth as it stands. With some adjustments here and there, Sāyana wants us to take the Rg Veda as it stands, without any critical scrutiny. He simply presented in classical Sanskrit what appears in Vedic Sanskrit, and wherever even this was not possible, he simply glossed it over. He added also for good measure stories of his own in his commentary. But what we want is not just a translation, in whatever language and however linguistically correct it may be, but a reasonable and intelligible interpretation, and that we do not have even now.

That was the scene as it stood till Western scholars of great distinction and ability took over Rg Vedic studies. We need not go into their motivations. Suffice it to say that they have expended a considerable amount of time and energy in this task. The drive has come mostly from German academicians whether in their own country, like Roth, Geldner, and so on, or emigrants to, Britain (Max Müller, for example) or the United States (Lanmann, for example) ; others in Britain, Macdonell and Keith, for example, or in France, Bergaigne, Langlois, etc., also have done very great work. The tradition has been continued by Louis Renou, Gonda and others.

What have the Western scholars contributed to our understanding of the Rg Veda ? Firstly, they have systematised the philology, treating Vedic Sanskrit as an unpolluted Indo-Germanic language. (In the last thirty or forty years, there has been a steady change in this attitude, with scholars like Gonda and Meyrhöfer producing more and more evidence to show the possibility of Dravidian (and Munda) influences in the formation of the Sanskrit language at its source. The new philology has in no way given us a meaningful reading of the text. All that we have are translations which struggle with the words, and lengthy dissertations on individual vocables. As for the mythology, the early attempts to solve the problems by comparative studies with other European cultures has now been abandoned, and each scholar produces his own interpretation of the myths. (Many Western scholars, themselves, such as Louis Renou, have realized these short-comings.)

We are no better off- to-day in understanding the Rg Veda than before. With Sāyana, we had at least something readable even if it be irrational, illogical and totally surrounded in mystery. Now, we do not have even that from the modern studies, with the added problem that the ground under us is continually shifting. Max Müller once prophesied that the Rg Veda would keep scholars engaged for many years. As things look at present, the exercise will end without achieving the hoped-for-result through sheer exhaustion of the scholars. This may be all right for the West, but can we afford to accept this situation ?

For the West, the Rg Veda is nothing more than an intellectual puzzle, whose solution, if at all ever reached, would, at the best, provide a link in the history of Hindu religion. We, Hindus cannot look at Rg Vedic studies in this way, as just an intellectual exercise. It is part and parcel of our culture and our religion. The Rg Veda has had in the past a powerful impact on our make-up, and even recently a very important movement, namely the Ārya Samāj, based itself on the Rg Veda as a scripture. This movement has far-reaching implications even in the political and social areas. Moreover, one of our most revered figures of recent times whose influence on current elitist society is very profound has drawn great inspiration from it. However spiritually uplifting, or chauvinistically useful, may be their views on the Rg Veda and its interpretation, they do not entirely satisfy the critical, rational, modern mind. And for a long time to come, Hindus cannot forget in their heart of hearts that the whole edifice of Hinduism, as a culture and religion, is built upon it. When a Hindu talks of his tradition, he knows that the foundations lie in the Veda, though he cannot say what it is and how it came to be a part of himself.

Can we afford to remain ignorant of our own history and the course of our religious development for long? We are in an age of intellectualism, an age of critical analysis, which demands that its intellectual curiosity be satisfied as far as possible before it allows faith to take over. If we, at least some of us, do not study the Vedas, and tell others how they are relevant to our present situation, how can we claim any value for them? The day will come when Hindus must secure their cultural foundations, or submit themselves to the secular gods of science which are hammering at their doors. We, Hindus, have today a kaleidoscopic view of our religion. The bits and pieces are floating about from which each man may choose what he likes. There is no central pillar which holds them altogether.

It is out of a painful awareness of this problem that I have come to the study of the Rg Veda, that mysterious central force which has somehow spawned a multitude of units, it itself having found its origin from the coming together of a variety of elements. After many years of study, I believe I have a very satisfactory solution to the problem of Rg Vedic interpretation and I present them in the form of a number of studies which I call 'Rg Vedic Studies'. The present volume carries five such studies. I hope to follow this up with others in batches of about this number each.

I may say at the outset that, as I now see it, the Rg Veda reveals its authors as men of very great intellectual calibre. The poetical elements, namely imagery, symbolism etc., are thoroughly fascinating and entrancing. There is spiritualism of the highest order not only in those pieces which, as in the tenth Mandala, openly give expression to it, but even in those obscure and, as Max Müller put it, ' tedious ' verses where it is concealed and not too apparent. Above all, there is about the whole work a remarkable spirit of eclectism. Many are the sources from which the ideas have flown in, Dravidian, Āryan and Munda. The language itself can put forward no claim to purity, such as pure Indo-European or pure Dravidian. It is a thoroughly good mixture. The mythology follows a consistent symbolism to express ideas which are current even now among the Hindus, and which will always be (with some exceptions), so long as man is what he is, deemed to be very high in form and concept. The Rg Vedic ṛṣis were in search of an answer to a question which every thinking man has to face sometime or other. What is this universe, how did it come into being, and what makes it tick ? They have provided us with a solution which will remain unsurpassed in its excellence and its truth for all time to come. They not only speculated, but also looked into their inner self through yoga. No better method has been discovered even by modern science in all its powerful glory, and there is no doubt that even the future cannot improve upon it. At least, it will remain so, so long as man remains the puny thing that he is. The Rg Vedic solution has, however, for various reasons been cloaked in a mythology which has made it completely mysterious till now.

Beyond this, I will not say anything more about what the Rg Veda is as I see it. I am trying to arrange my studies in a sequence which will gradually lead the reader to the final denouement.

Scholarly readings of the Rg Veda present a picture of disjointed concepts with no central feature binding them together. In this they are one with Sāyana. That is not surprising since it is his commentary which they generally follow, modified only by the modern technique of Indo-European comparative philology. This is a very serious short-coming in these works.

The Rg Veda presents the weltanschauung of the civilization in which the ṛṣis lived. It is difficult to believe that they did not possess a comprehensive world-view, and that their ideas were so disconnected as the scholars would have us believe. Quite obviously, the failing is not in the Rg Veda, but in the interpretations which are placed before us.

To me, it appears that there is a central concept running throughout the Rg Veda, which reveals itself once we are able to penetrate the mysteries of the myths. Any weltanschauung is a complete circle and the difficulty in an analytical description lies in deciding where to start. Unless the complete picture is known, it is difficult to realise how the parts fit into the whole. On the other hand, the validity of any discussion about the whole depends upon the acceptance of the description of the various parts. This dilemma I have tried to meet and in the choice of my methodology it has played a vital part.

In my understanding of the centre round which the Rg Veda world-view turns, the concept of Agni plays a very significant role. The Agni which the Rg Veda mentions by name is of course in some places the physical fire, but more often than not it is only a symbolic expression for some more powerful force. On the other hand, even this power does not represent the central concept, which lies even further beyond.

That being so, once all the parts of the Rg Vedic Agni are put together, it will serve as a light to lead us further.

I have followed this principle in arranging my articles. My presentation will bring together the various myths grouped together in such a way that each group focuses attention on one aspect of Agni's traits. Since there are many such aspects, there will be many such groups. (Lest there be any misunderstanding arising out of my references to Agni, I would like to make it very clear that, with all due respect and reverence, I find myself unable to agree with either Swami Dayanand or Sri Aurobindo on this subject).

Once the various group studies are completed, it will be just one step more to reach the core thought. And once that is reached, there should be no difficulty in tackling the many peripheral problems, such as the Ārya-Dāsa question.

I do not claim to be able to produce a solution to all the Rg Vedic problems, but I certainly think that most of the major internal aspects can be rationally explained. I shall also, at the appropriate time, take up many of the external questions such as the probable relationship between the Rg Veda and the Indus Valley Civilization.

At this stage, I have one important point to make. Rg Vedic myths are the foundation for all later myths of orthodox, brahminical Hinduism. And they are all ' manufactured myths ', that is, unlike the myths of primeval societies, they were formulated to explain not just natural phenomena, but to express in mythical terms deep concepts, whether metaphysical, social, moral or physical. They are prior to the religions, called the yajñas, which borrowed from them indiscriminately and applied them improperly with ulterior motives.

A few words now about my methodology. I have tried to follow, as far as possible, the methodology of the Western scholars, but wherever this has not worked, I have adopted an independent line, the justification for which I have made out at the appropriate places. The Rg Veda today is in the hands of scholars, the general public even amongst the Hindu elites taking no interest in it. I have, therefore, necessarily to present my arguments in a way which will be acceptable to the experts even if my views do not find favour with them. I have, therefore, made extensive quotations from the original text and wherever I have resorted to Dravidian philology, I have given the Tamil rendering (along with the Roman script as standardised in the Dravidian Etymological Dictionary—(DED) —of Emeneau and Burrow). The general reader may find this somewhat tedious. On the other hand, I have tried to adopt a style of writing which is as simple as possible and which, I hope, will counter-balance this shortcoming. Perhaps, one day when this series is finished, I shall be able to bring out a popular version of my findings.

Rg Vedic studies today are so much in the hands of academicians that every work carries an imposing array of quotations from the works of other scholars, together with a formidable bibliographical list. I have avoided this, as far as possible, not because I owe nothing to anybody else, but precisely because I owe too much. Moreover, if I quote one scholar, I will have to acknowledge many others who have crossed swords with him. My debt to others lies in the inspiration I have drawn from them, not the conclusions reached by me.

The translation in English which I have utilised generally is Griffith's. Where, however, I have found it necessary, I have resorted to Wilson also, and while doing so, I have acknowledged my debt to him. These are the only scholars who have provided full translations of the texts in English. With neither of them can I say I am in agreement. The problem is not in the verbal aspects of the translation, except where the unique nature of Sanskrit syntax makes more than one reading equally correct. The problem lies in the mythology and that has not been solved in the English, German or French translations or commentaries. That is why I have not thought it necessary to quote from the translations in German or French. That would only have made matters more complex, since it would have been necessary to further translate them into English since my work is addressed primarily to people conversant with the English language, which I know is the case with all scholars of Indology. As regards the Sukta quotations, they are from the Pada-Pāṭa.

I have in conclusion to express my profound sense of gratitude to Shri N. Mahalingam, but for whose generous help I would not have been able to carry out these researches and see them brought out in print. A deeply spiritual person himself, he has done much for religious and scholarly causes. At the same time, he has taken great interest in all aspects of Hindu culture and history. Such qualities are rare enough in any individual these days, but that they should be combined with the successful management of large modern industries is something which should command the respect of every one of us.

I owe much to many others amongst whom I would like to mention by name Shri C. S. Mahadevan, who has encouraged me throughout and has taken immense pains in seeing this work through the printing. I do not know what I would have done, if I had not had his help, as well as that of many others who have cheerfully borne the task of typing, and frequently retyping, the manuscripts.

I need hardly say that the views expressed in this work and the interpretations presented herein are entirely my responsibility, as also the shortcomings that may be found therein.

RG VEDIC STUDIES.

FIFTH SERIES.

SPECIAL INTRODUCTION.

In all religions, the most abstract forms in which the divine manifests itself—or rather makes its presence known to man—are Light and Sound. This is the case even in Christianity, Islam and Judaism, which in varying degrees disown anthropomorphism, or the depiction of the divine in the image of man which is called idolatry. The mystic also expresses his experience of the ultimate Absolute in terms of Light and Sound only. A distinction is however drawn between the light and sound of human experience, and the Absolute expressed in these terms, which both transcends and is immanent in the former.

This vein of mysticism which sees the Absolute as primordial Light and Sound runs throughout the Rg Veda. This concept is given open expression quite frequently as far as Light is concerned, under the term ' Jyoti ', as explained in the Studies of the very First Series. The Sound aspect of the Absolute is however not so directly stressed, but is embodied in mythical form in many passages, the symbolism of which has to be correctly understood before the implications are realised. Moreover, divine sound and human voice (or sound in nature) are distinguished in the Rg Veda by the use of different words as explained earlier. It is in music, human speech and the thunder of the dark rain clouds that the Divine is seen as manifesting its Voice. Vāk (Voice) and Vāṇi (Music) play for Sound the part played by Jyoti in the case of Light. It is interesting to note in this connection that while the roots 'svar' (स्वर्) and 'svan' (स्वन्) mean 'to sound', 'to sing praise of' etc., the former in the noun form means, 'light', 'sun', etc., whence the derived form, 'svarga', (स्वर्ग) gives 'heaven', or 'leading to heaven', etc. Clearly this is not just a play on words, but is also an expression of a belief in the identity of light and sound as constituting the first manifestation of the Divene Absolute.

The Rg Vedic concept of Sound as a manifestation of the Divine is to be found in many myths, some of which appear very abstruse. The simplest are those that describe Vāk, where the connection is plain and straight-forward. In the myths of Bṛhaspati the concept is somewhat shrouded, but it calls for no great skill to unravel the mystery. More difficult, however, is the myth of three-and-thirty devas which appears very frequently, and whose significance can be realised only when it is connected with the role of Agni as an intermediating Power between man, the devas and the Absolute. This is also the necessary condition for appreciating the divine nature of War-dance and song, as also the musical instruments about which there are plenty of references in the Rg Veda. Some of the most subtle passages in the text concern music and its laws, which are concealed in what seem inexplicable puzzles and brain-teasers.

Within these latter, the text has concealed certain basic principles of sophisticated music, such as tones and notes, which are the foundations on which Hindu classical (and even Western) music is built.

The studies in this Series (the Fifth) are concerned with these matters.

The first of these studies deals with the passages dealing with Vāk (voice) (वाक् or वाच्) of which there are many. Vāk is the Queen of the devas, who dwells in 'svarga', but is also present in all homes. She is identified with Aditi and Svar, (or Jyoti), and is, like Agni, a herald between heaven and earth. There is a whole hymn (10.125) which describes her nature, power etc. (This is quoted in extenso, along with the English translation, in the Study.) The text makes clear Agni's role in the evolution of Vāk, and mentions her four forms, corresponding to the various manifestations of Agni, who is Mātariśvan (the voice in the Mother, 'mātari' plus 'śvan', or 'svan', the 's' of the latter having become 'ś' under the influence of the preceding 'r'. Discussions on the origin of Vāk introduce the concept of Brahman, which in turn reveals an underlying clash between different systems of human speech. Bṛhaspati now appears as one form of Agni supporting the speech of the Āryas or brahmins, which stands in opposition to the earlier speech form of the Dāsas, inspired by Agni in his former aspect. There are many passages which emphasise the differences between these two speeches. When these are examined in detail, they reveal the existence of many linguistic-ritual controversies between an earlier and a later culture.

Study number 5.2 deals with the *myth of the three-and-thirty gods of the Rg Veda*, and relates it to the passage of Agni from heaven to earth, and the creation of the three regions of space occasioned thereby. It is found that the myth symbolises the divine nature of speech, and applies it to a language whose alphabets are 33 in number. This is traced to the oldest Tamil grammar, namely Tholkāppiyam, and it is found that there is a perfect concordance in details between the two.

The existence of such a linguistic clash is revealed also in the myths dealing with Sarasvatī, Iḷā, Bhārati and Mahi. Mahi is identifiable with Vāk, Bhārati with human speech, and Iḷā with hymns and prayer. But it is Sarasvatī who proves to be the most interesting and important member of the triad, Bhārati, Iḷā and Sarasvatī. It has been found necessary, therefore, to devote much greater attention to the passages where she appears.

Verse 10.30.12 takes us straight to the heart of the matter on the subject of Sarasvatī. She gives intellect and immortality and is the patroness of singers. Hymns 6.61, 7.95 and 7.96 provide further details. There is in these verses a play upon the root 'nad' (नद्) from which are derived the words 'nadi' (नदि) and 'nāda' (नाद), meaning river and sound respectively. The majesty and soul-stirring trait of songs made men consider them as divine, and they found in rivers an apt symbol to represent song, and divine sound. Sarasvatī's realm is in antarikṣa, which is the region of the Waters, the source of all energy and power in life, the first manifestations of the primordial Jyoti. The antarikṣa is the ocean filled with Waters. The rivers are songs of praise. Similarly there is a play upon the root 'gir' (गिर्) meaning 'to praise, to swell', etc. and also 'mountain'. The phrase, 'girā jātah', (गिरा जात:) means 'born on a mountain', as well as 'made manifest by song'. Indra is a lover of songs which flow to him (as Soma). Again, the word 'adri' (अद्रि) from root 'ad', (अद्) provides opportunities for word play of a similar nature as between 'stone' and 'jaw' (of mouth) from whence we have 'stone' (of Soma crusher, the press stones of 10.94), and 'song' respectively.

All this provides a clue to the significance of the numbers seven and twenty-one, which appear frequently in connection with rivers. A detailed analysis of the concerned passages reveals that these are references to the seven notes and three octaves of music. It is found that there are other passages which seem to refer to seven octaves. These are clues for solving the puzzle posed in many verses, principally 10.28.4, 10.28.9, and 10.13.3 all of which stand revealed as referring to music. Finally, hymn, 10.94 is discussed in detail and shown to be an allegorical poem.

The preceding discussion introduced us to Bṛhaspati, who is the subject of Study number 5.4. He is also called Brāhmaṇaspati. The relevant passages reveal him as slowly infiltrating into Rg Vedic culture as the leader of new forces supplanting the old traditions. Gradually, Indra becomes subordinate to him. In hymn 4.50, there are at least five verses (7 to 11), where we find a new socio-political system in which the brahmin lords it over the kṣatriya. Various verses in hymn 10.67 also reveal Bṛhaspati as instituting new types of rituals, namely yajna (यज्ञ), the sacrifices.

We also find there Bṛhaspati as shaping a new language, which quite obviously is Vedic Sanskrit.

Study 5.5 deals with war-dance and song of which also Sarasvatī is the patroness. This naturally brings us to the subject of Weapons of War, dealt with in various passages, with a whole hymn, namely, 6.75 devoted to them. With these are associated Rudra as Kāma or Gandharva. One of the most interesting verses is 1.117.21, where the Aśvins are 'said to blow away the Dasyu with a trumpet', just as the walls of Jericho crumble in the Bible.

The last study, namely number 5.6, shows the part played by Agni in all these matters as the principal instrument in the manifestation of the World by the Divine. Agni is present everywhere where Speech, Prayers, Dance and Music prevail, being the transmitting agent of the ultimate Power, both 'svar' and 'svan', that is Jyoti. The manifested world of sound, as of light, is nothing but Agni.

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RG VEDIC STUDIES—5TH SERIES.

STUDY 5.1.

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VĀK, THE QUEEN.

Rg Vedic commentators have failed to bring out the emphasis placed in the text on language, speech, music, song and hymns. There are so many passages where this is emphasized, and some in whole hymns too, that it is surprising that this should be the case.

In this matter, the primacy goes to Vāk who is termed the Queen of devas (rāṣṭrī devānām) (राष्ट्री देवानाम्) (8.89.10), and in 10.125.3, a hymn in which she appears as the speaker, she describes herself in the following wards :

> ' अहं राष्ट्री संऽगमनी वसूनां चिकितुषी प्रथमा यज्ञियानां
> तां मा देवाः वि अदधुः पुरुऽत्रा भूरिऽस्थात्रां भूरि आऽवेशयंतीं ॥ '
> (10.125.3)

> ' I am the Queen, the gatherer up of treasures, most
> thoughtful, first of those who merit worship.
> Thus Gods have stablished me in many places
> with many homes to enter and abide in '
> (10.125.3)

Vāk is not just speech as is commonly understood, due to the word being cognate to the English ' voice ', which is taken ordinarily to mean ' speaking '. In the Rg Veda, it has a very much wider connotation to include such varied matter as roar, thunder, noise, clamour, murmur, directing, naming, calling, praising, extolling, song, lifting up or raising (usually through praise), perceiving, understanding, knowledge, and finally all these personified as a devi, or goddess, who takes the primacy of place even amongst the devas, as the imperial Queen of them all, with a dwelling for herself far above them all in svar (स्वर्) or svarga (स्वर्ग), a heaven above the heavens, the place of eternal light. The (root) word 'svar' refers on the one hand to sound, praise, song and ecstatic speech, and on the other to bliss, happiness, good fortune, success, and celestial light or luminous space. (Verses 7.44.1 and 10.36. 1, for example, treat svar, the LIGHT itself as a deity). By extension it applies also to things in nature, such as Water, where the god-head is believed to lie. Vāk also often speaks through the voice of animals (bulls, cows, etc.) and birds (kapinjala, kapota, the dove) etc.

The identification of Vāk with Water and celestial Light is a concept of the most profound importance in the Rg Veda which has been passed on to later Hinduism. This is a subject which will come up for detailed discussion later on in these studies. It has to be viewed in conjunction with the equally basic view that Jyoti, the essence of the godhead, manifests Itself as Light through Aditi and Agni, as I have pointed out in my earlier studies (especially in the First Series).

Vāk's most important function is to act as herald between heaven and earth, the two Worlds. She (or It, the two pronouns, being equally valid, are freely inter-changeable in this case) acts as an intermediary between the devas, asuras and human beings. Rg Vedic verse 1.173.3 says : ‘antah dūtah na rodasī carat Vāk’ (अन्तः दूतः चरत् न रोदसी वाक्). Vāk has, as it were, one foot in heaven and one on earth, going through antarikṣa, the region in-between, just like Agni, whom she resembles also in her function of herald between the two worlds. The difference in gender (or sex) between Vāk and Agni is not a very important factor. As I have already stated, Agni is often an androgyne. In majestic words, she herself proclaims her functions and activities in hymn 10.125 which I quote in full on account of its importance, together with Griffith's translation :

‘ अहं रुद्रेभिः वसुभिः चरामि आदित्यै उत विश्वऽदेवैः
अहं मित्रावरुणा उभा बिभर्मि अहं इंद्राग्नि अश्विना उभा ’ ॥ १ ॥

‘ अहं सोमं आहनसं बिभर्मि अहं त्वष्टारं उत पूषणं भगं
अहं दधामि द्रविणं हविष्मते सुप्रऽअव्ये यजमानाय सुन्वते ’ ॥ २ ॥

‘ अहं राष्ट्री संऽगमनी वसूनां चिकितुषी प्रथमा यज्ञियानां
तां मा देवाः वाः विवि अदधुः पुरुऽत्रा भूरिऽस्थात्रां भूरिआ ऽवेशयंर्ती ’ ॥ ३ ॥

‘ मया सः अन्नं अत्ति यः विऽपश्यति यः प्रणिति यः ईं शृणोति उक्तं
अमंतवः मां ते उत क्षियंती श्रत श्रुधिऽवं ते वदामि ’ ॥ ४ ॥

‘ अहं एव स्वयं इदं वदामि जुष्टं देवेभिः उत मानुषेभिः
यं कामये तंऽतं उग्रं कृणोमि तं ब्रह्माणं तं ऋषिं तं सुऽमेधां ’ ॥ ५ ॥

‘ अहं रुद्राय धनुः आ तनोमि ब्रह्मऽद्विषे शरवे हंत वै ऊं
अहं जनाय सऽमदं कृणोमि अहं द्यावापृथिवी आ विवेश ’ ॥ ६ ॥

‘ अहं सुवे पितरं अस्य मूर्धन् मम योनिः अप्ऽसु अंतः समुद्रे
ततः वि तिष्ठे भुवना अनु विश्वा उत अमूं द्यां वर्ष्मणा उत स्पृशामि ’ ॥ ७ ॥

‘ अहं एव वातःऽइव प्र वामि आऽरभमाणा भुवनानि विश्वा
परः दिवा परः एना पृथिव्या एतावती महिना सं बभूव ’. ॥ ८ ॥

HYMN 10.125.

1. I travel with the Rudras and the Vasus, with the Adityas and All-Gods I wander.
I hold aloft both Varuna and Mitra, Indra and Agni, and the pair of Aśvins.

2. I cherish and sustain high-swelling Soma, and Tvaṣṭṛ I support, Pūṣan, and Bhaga.
I load with wealth the zealous sacrificer who pours the juice and offers his oblation.

3. I am the Queen, the gatherer-up of treasures, most thoughtful, first of those who merit worship.
Thus Gods have stablished me in many places, with many homes to enter and abide in.

4. Through me alone all eat the food that feeds them,—each man who sees, breathes, hears and the word outspoken.
They know it not, but yet they dwell beside me. Hear, one and all, the truth as I declare it.

5. I, verily myself, announce and utter the word that Gods and men alike shall welcome.

I make the man I love exceeding mighty,
make him a sage, a
Ṛṣi, and a Brahman.

6. I bend the bow for Rudra that his arrow may
strike and slay
the hater of devotion.
I rouse and order battle for the people, and
I have penetrated
Earth and Heaven.

7. On the world's summit I bring forth the Father :
my home is
in the waters, in the ocean.
Thence I extend over all existing creatures,
touch even
yonder heaven with my forehead.

8. I breathe a strong breath like the wind and
tempest, the while
I hold together all existence.
Beyond this wide earth and beyond the heavens
I have become
so mighty in my grandeur.
(10.125)

When and how did Vāk originate ?

There are two different versions. Both accept Agni's role in the evolution of Vāk, but differ in certain vital details of the modus of operation which lead to gravest consequences and which also reveal deep sectarian—and even more fundamental—controversies in the development of pre-Rg Vedic history of concepts and of life.

At this stage, however, we are concerned only with the nature of the connection between Agni and Vāk.

Verse 1.164.45 details the scope or area of operation of Vāk :

> ' चत्वारि वाक् परिऽमिता पदानि तानि विदुः ब्राह्मणाः ये मनीषिणः
> गुहा त्रीणी निऽहिता न इंगयंति तुरीयं पाचः मनुष्याः वदंति '
> (1.164.45).

Translated :

> ' Speech hath been measured out in four divisions, the Brahmans who have understanding know them.
>
> Three kept in close concealment cause no motion ; of speech men speak only the fourth division '
> (Griffith, 1.164.45).

Wilson's Translation :

> ' Four are the difinite grades of speech : those Brahmans who are wise know them: three deposited in secret, indicate no meaning : men speak the fourth grade of speech '.
> (Wilson, 1.164.45).

I have given Wilson's translation also as it is clearer in certain respects. But neither Wilson, nor Griffith helps us to understand what is meant by ' three. . . . . . cause no motion ' (Griffith) or ' indicate no meaning ' (Wilson). The latter is, of course, quite clear in statement, and is nearer the truth. But the question remains : Why do the three (aspects of Vāk) deposited in secret, indicate no meaning ? To me, it appears that it is to be understood both literally, and figuratively. I shall discuss the implications of the literal meaning later on. For the present, I shall consider the probable figurative aspect only. For this purpose, I feel that verse 10.71.11 provides very valuable service. (The whole hymn, namely 10.71, which is addressed to jnānam, (ज्ञानं) KNOWLEDGE, will have to be discussed later. For the time being, I am resorting only to the 11th verse of the hymn).

> ‘ ऋचां त्व: पोषं आस्ते पुपुष्वान् गायत्रं त्व: गायति शक्वारिषु
> ब्रह्मा त्व: वदति जातऽविद्यां यज्ञस्य मात्रां वि मिपीते ऊं त्व: ॥ ’
>
> (10.71.11).

Translated :

‘ One plies his constant task reciting verses :
One sings the holy psalm in Śakvarī measures.

One more, the Brahman, tells us the lore of being,
and one lays down the rules of sacrificing ’.

(Griffith 10.71.11)

Wilson’s Translation :

‘ One (the Hotṛ) is diligent in the repetition of the verses (of the Rc) ; another (the Udgatṛ) chants the Gāyatra (the Sāman) in the Śakvarī metre ; another the Brahmā declares the knowledge of what is to be done ; another (the Adhwaryu) measures the materials of the sacrifice ’.

(Wilson, 10.71.11)

Here again, Wilson helps out in some places where Griffith proves difficult. Nevertheless, some additional paraphrasing is necessary to show the link between this verse and the one discussed earlier, namely 1.164.45.

The Ṛc is prayer through praise, the Sāman is song, the rules of sacrificing are told by the Adhwaryu, mostly in prose, and the Brahmā (or Brāhman) who presides over the whole ritual remains mostly silent, (that is to say, he is lost in thought or contemplation, which is the divine Form of Vāk of speech), and the last, the Adhwaryu 'lays down the rules of sacrificing' which is mostly in prose, or the ordinary speech of people. We have here, therefore, the four forms of Vāk, (1) Praise and Prayer, (2) Song, (3) Celestial Voice or deep thought, and (4) Ordinary speech of people (which here refers to Vedic prose.). These are the Four Forms of Vāk referred to in 1.164.45.

These four Forms of Vāk find a close correspondence (or even identification) in certain manifestations of Agni. First of all, he is the Hotṛ supreme. (For this, I need provide no verse authority here, for it is an unquestioned and fully established fact). Secondly, Agni loves songs, but this is a trait common to many other devas also, namely Aśvins, Soma, Pūṣan, Indra and so on (the major share goes to Indra and Agni). However, it is only Indra and Agni who are termed 'Lover of Songs'. (Indra enjoys this appellation in quite a number of verses, as against the very few, (for example, 2.6.3), in which it goes to Agni). But, there are certain special aspects to Agni's singing which are not shared even by Indra. Agni is the 'tongue of the devas' (6.21.11), not in the sense usually attributed to that phrase of 'consuming oblations', but in the sense of being a singer himself as 7.34.9 has it.

'अभि वः देवींधियं दधिध्वं प्रवः देवऽन्ना वाचं कृणुध्वं'
(7.34.9).

'Closely about you lay your heavenly song,
and send your voice where the Gods abide'.
(7.34.8).

(The verse is addressed to Agni as is made very clear in the preceding one, namely 7.34.8). Songs girah, (गिरः), laudatory words (vācah sustutaya : वाचः सुऽस्तुतयः), and prayers full of eulogy (matayah ṛcah मतयः . . . ऋचः) indeed go to Agni, 11.91.12. Agni, says 3.10.5, ‘ brings Ordainer-like the light of songs ’ (‘ vipām jyotisim bibhrate na vedase ’, (विपां ज्योतिंषि विभ्रते न वेधसें). Special attention is drawn to the phrase, vipām jyotiṣim, which equates the song of Agni to Jyoti, the primeval Power of Light about which I have presented a Study in the First Series, namely Study I.2). In 4.41.8, Agni is asked to ‘ sing in answer ’ (घोषि अर्वाक्, ghoṣi arvāk) to the songs and laudations showered on the deva by the worshipper. Agni, ‘ the herald and messenger of all the Vasus ’, is in 1.58.7, said to conduct the sacrifice deftly with seven tongues (hotāram sapta juhvo yajiṣṭam, (होतारं सप्त जुह्वो यजिष्ठं), and the seven tongues can only be used by the sacrificer, the role assigned to Agni here, for recitation and singing the hymns, and not for consuming purposes. The meaning of the term ‘ seven tongues ’ of Agni has not so far been correctly understood, and my views thereon will be presented in the later studies of this series. As it is, Verse 2.10.6. has also something relevant to this subject, when it says ‘ I call on perfect Agni who with an eloquent tongue dispenses sweetneess ’ (anūnam agnim juhvā vacasyā madhupṛcam dhanasā johavimi, (अनूनं अग्निजुह्वा वचस्या मधुऽपृचं धनऽसाः जोहवीमी ॥). Here quite obviously, Agni’s tongue is expressing sweet words, and it is an eloquent tongue too. Agni exalts also the songs of worshippers (3.24.4, 3.29.10, etc.).

Songs and praises to Agni or Indra, (there are more than 200 passages which refer to each of them) make

Agni swell up, grow large in size, become strong and so on, expressed by predicate forms drawn from roots, such as vṛdh (वृध्) (5.14.6, 7.1.5, etc.) or vakṣ (वक्ष्) (8.82.9), taviṣīya (तविषीय), Denom. from (तविषि) (3.31.13), or ric (रिच्) (6.21.2). Another root which plays a similar part is śū (शू) which means 'to swell', 'to grow', 'to thrive', 'to increase', 'to become strong' and so on. There are nearly 20 passages where various derivatives of this root make their appearance. In many of these cases, for example, 1.54.7, 2.25.1, 7.32.6, etc., such benefits, namely strength, power, prosperity are achieved by the worshipper (of Indra, Agni, or Maruts) through prayer to, or praise of, the deva concerned. There is even a passage, 6.19.2, where songs and oblations (dhiṣaṇā, धिषणा) induce Indra to reach complete perfection (śūśuvānsam, शूशुवांसं) at once. The power of praise, prayer, devotion, etc. are as great as that ! Stanza 2.39.7 even tells us that the Aśvins are prayed to 'sharpen the worshipper's song as an axe is sharpened upon a whetstone' so that the supplicant may become invested with vigour.

This is the background in which hymn 3.29.11 regarding Agni as Mātariśvan must be read and interpreted. The second line of the verse with which we are concerned here reads as follows :

'मातरिश्वा यत् अमिमीत मात वातस्य सर्गः अभवत् सरीमणि' ॥
(2nd line of 3.29.11)

'Formed in his mother he is Mātariśvan ;
he hath, in
his course, become the rapid flight of wind'.
(2nd line of 3.29.11)

The word (name) Mātariśvan is quite obviously derived by a combination of the two words, mātari and śvan. Even more obviously, the stanza's objective is to provide or suggest an etymology for the name based upon these two words. It is difficult to accept Sayana's etymological explanation not only because of its linguistic shortcomings, but also because it does not give much credit to the composing ṛṣi's intellect to say that all that he meant was to say that he (Agni) breathed in the material environment and was, therefore, called Mātariśvan.

That ' mātari ' here means ' in the mother ' (womb) seems unquestionable. It is the ' śvan ' part which poses a problem. Scholars derive this word from the root ' śū ', (शू) which would make ' śvan ' to mean ' swelling, thriving, prospering, growing strong, and so on '. But, there is nothing extra-ordinary in such things happening to a child in its mother's womb in the ordinary course of its natural nourishment. The poet on the contrary seems to wish to convey something special about the natural condition. He apparently wishes to suggest that Agni was developing his propensity to song (Vāk) even while in the womb, and he bases this on the principles already mentioned in this Study, namely, firstly that song and praise endows strength (for example in 3.5.2, Agni is said to have grown in strength by song), and secondly that Agni himself is a songster (6.3.6, 6.11.3, etc.), poet (kavi), priest (hotṛ) and so on. This is further confirmed by the immediately preceding stanza, namely 3.29.10- which asks Agni to ' prosper the songs ' the worshippers were singing. Now, it is easy to explain why Mātariśvan had ' in his course become the rapid flight of wind' (Vātasya sargah abhavat sarīmani). For it is in the nature of Vāk, as speech, song, or prayer to be carried away by the wind. There is word play also involved here on the syllable, vā (वा), to blow, and the words vāta, and vāk (vāc) (वाच्).

Thus, we reach the conclusion that Mātariśvan is the form taken by Agni to become Vāk. (A simpler argument would be to identify—'śvan' with 'svan' (sound) for which some authority does exist.

This is the first of the theories put forward by the Rg Veda for the origin of Vāk.

A second, and what appears to be a later theory, is the one which brings a new deity, namely Bṛhaspati, as the creator of Vāk. (In a burst of eclecticism, not rare in the Rg Veda or in Hinduism in general, a link between the two theories is maintained by identifying Bṛhaspati not only with Agni, but also with his Mātariśvan form as in 1.190.2. He is also a form of Agni, but his methods are more involved, and sectarian. Compared to the first, which is a naturalistic one, this has a very mīmāmsic bias, and brings in controversial issues, centring round the primacy of authority of the brāhmins. Bṛhaspati himself will form the subject of the next study (Study No. 5.2), and only to the extent that he is connected with aspects of Vāk will he figure in this study.

In 1.164.34, the question is raised :

'In which supreme heaven does speech abide?' Verse 1.164.35 answers 'In the highest heaven of Brahman'. (brahmā ayam vācah paramam vi-yoma) (ब्रह्मा अयं वाचः परमं विऽओम), Brahman who was not in the picture before, makes his appearance. And the question now arises who, or what this Brahman (or Brahmā) is. A considerable freedom for transition from one concept to another, thus gradually leading to the introduction of new ideas, is achieved by word play. Brahman is by a slight variation in accent made to signify two different concepts. (brahman, m, and brahman, n). Brahman (n) is exaltation of spirit, prayer (devotional), rapture, etc., whereas Brahman (m) is, to start, with the worshipper himself, a worshipper of a special kind who knows the sepeech or language of the gods. From here onwards, a number of changes occur step by step in the significance of the word. It now designates the chief priest at the Soma pressing ceremony possessing special knowledge of divine mysteries, ultimately leading to the special community or groups of such priests. Then, a time comes when he asserts his spiritual authority over temporal chiefs, and a clash between the two groups comes out into the open. (This will be gone into in detail in this and succeeding studies). A special divinity, namely Brahmaṇaspati, is invented to take over, control and be in charge of all these matters. Behind the whole scene hovers the spirit of Brahmā, the God, or supreme spirit, who, however, in the Rg Veda, does not attain the stature he achieves later on.

The factors occasioning the rise of these disputations and the course taken by them can be examined later in detail. They are subtly concealed, but at the same time so pronounced that it is possible to establish them by a careful reading of the text and collation of data available in it. This, however, requires separate discussion for itself, and it will concern me here only to the extent it affects the origin, and functions of Vāk, and her relationship with other devas and man, as also worship.

Having said that Vāk, according to this theory, abides in the heaven of Brahmā, the Rg Veda's answer to the question who is Brahmā is provided in various passages. In the Rg Veda, Brahmā remains a manifestation or Form of Agni himself, and it is left to the later texts to elevate him further up, in a process whereby he loses personality totally and becomes an 'It'. (At that stage, brahman, neutral, meaning worship, prayer, exaltation of soul to the highest possible pitch leads to its being identified with brahman, masculine, as the Supreme Being, and obliteration even of the distinction between the divine brahman and the human brahman).

Verse 7.7.5 declares brahman to be Agni, (agnih brahmā, (अग्निः ब्रह्मा) seated in every home (nṛsadane) (नृऽसदने), whom both Heaven and Earth exalt (dyōh ca yam pṛthivī vavrdhāte) (द्योः च यं पृथिवी ववृधाते). Verse 4.9.4. and others repeat this assertion. (Other devas, such as Indra in 6.45.7, or Maruts in 5.29.3 are only brāhamanās, or priests, and not brahman, the deva, who is Agni). In this milieu comes Bṛhaspati as the Brahman Priest (10.141.3) invited with songs as hymns along with Agni, Ādityas, Viṣnu, etc., thus emerging as a deva with and individuality different from Agni, though still being only a manifestation or form of that deva. He is now the Leader of Song and possesses a sweet tongue (1.190.1). (He is here usurping the place given elsewhere to Soma, 9.62.26, 9.99.6, 9.101.6, et al.). That is how Bṛhaspati has come to play a role in the origin of Vāk.

There are a number of scattered passages connecting Bṛhaspati and Vāk (as Speech, Song, Prayer, or as personified) (for example, in 2.23.2, he is Father of Sacred Prayer, in 2.23.19, he is controller of hymns, who has a seven-fold mouth producing thundering sound to destroy enemies, in 4.50.4, he is (7.97.5) the clear-voice God, 'śuci krandam' (शुचिऽक्रंदं), and he engendered the 'fourth hymn' in 10.67.1, etc., the most clear and comprehensive exposition on the subjectis to be found in that supreme paean to Vāk and knowledge (jnānam, ज्ञानम्) which is hymn 10.71).

Vāk in this hymn is not just Voice, portrayed either as the Queen of sound, or as utterance, speech, song or prayer of mankind or the divine voice. It is also the Supreme Wisdom, or Knowledge and Experience of the primeval Being. These various aspects will have to be dealt with elsewhere either in this or later studies. Here, I will not enter into those regions, but first search for vāk in the ordinary sense.

Verse 2 of the hymn (in the first line) attributes the origin of Vāk to language created by the wise in spirit, but this is language which has been cleaned up, as corn is winnowed in a sieve.

'सक्तुंऽइव तितउना पुनंतः यत्र धीराः मनसा वाचं अक्रत ॥'

(1st line of 10.71.2)

'Where, like men cleansing corn-flour in a cribble, the wise in spirit have created language'.

(1st line of 10.71.2)

This Vāk is, therefore, not the crude language spoken by ordinarily people, but by the wise, or as we may say, those learned in spirit. This Vāk was formed by picking up the excellent and spotless parts of language in the primitive stage, and it was treasured and then imparted to the wise. The verse does not say ' by whom ', but we are to presume that Vāk, the Queen, herself did all this purification, (literally, ' Sanskrit ') treasuring, and revealing, and that she did it through affection for these people who went in search of Wisdom. Verse 3 provides more details. The people who were thus favoured, had first to conduct worship through sacrifice, when they learnt that the secret was with Ṛṣis, from whom it was taken and fashioned into song by seven singers. When we go back now to verse 2 (second line), we find that this refined language establishes a sort of secret religious society amongst those familiar with it. This is the knowledge possessed by Bṛhaspati (verse 1).

I will now quote all the three verses, namely verses 1, 2 and 3 of hymn 10.71.

' ब्रहस्पते प्रथमं वाचः अग्रं यत् प्र ऐरत नामऽधेयं दधानाः
यत् एषां श्रेष्ठं यत् अरिप्रं आसीत् प्रेणा तत् एषां निऽहितं गुहा आविः ।। '
(10.71.1)

' सक्तुंऽइव तितउना पुनंतः यत्र धीराः मनसा वाचं अक्रत
अत्र सखायः सख्यानि जानते भद्रा एषां लक्ष्मीः निऽहिता अधि वाचि ।। '
(10.71.2)

' यज्ञेन वाचः पदऽवीयं आयन् तां अनु अविंदन् ऋषिषु प्रऽविष्टां
तां आऽभृत्य वि अदधुः पुरुऽत्रा तां सप्त रेभाः अभि सं नवंते ।। '
(10.71.3)

The last verse of the hymn, namely verse no. 11, has been referred to and quoted earlier. The remaining verses, namely 4 to 10 are concerned with explaining the brahman community's association with this Vāk which is in their secret possession, and the supremacy and holiness that is their due arising from this. It is not, say verses 8 and 9, for example, sufficient for the brahman to know the language ; he must also employ it with whole-hearted devotion in sacrificial worship. Verse 10 makes it clear how with the aid of the knowledge of this language and ritual, the brahman triumphs over others. I quote verse 10 :

> ' सर्वे नंदंति यशसा आऽगतेन सभाऽसहेन सख्या सखायः
> किल्बिषऽस्पृत् पितुऽसनिः हि एषां अरं हितः भवति वाजिनाय '
>
> (10.71.10)

Translated :

> ' All friends are joyful in the friend who cometh
> in triumph, having conquered in assembly.
>
> He is their blame-averter, food-provider ;
> prepared is he and fit for deed and vigour '.
>
> (10.71.10)

(Friend here means a member of the company of brahmans, as clarified by verse 2, which I have discussed earlier.)

All this makes it clear beyond doubt that what is referred to in this hymn is Vedic Sanskrit, both poetical and prose of ordinary communication. Verse 11 of this hymn elaborates it further. It divides the language into four divisions. (1) the versification of the Rg Veda ; (2) the song measures of the Sama Veda ; (3) the prose of the Adhvaryu ; and (4) the language of the Supreme Being Brahmā, which is heard through the heart and not the ear. (The Supreme Being communicates in Sanskrit, but only silently, while men (the elect, communicate in the same language but through voice). This is the language of Bṛhaspati, as verses 10.68.7 & 8 make it clear. (I shall discuss these verses later.)

It should be clear by now that the whole purport of this hymn and the isolated passages already referred to is to imply that it was Bṛhaspati who, as Lord of Prayer, presides over this language which is Vedic Sanskrit. (This logically makes Sanskrit a later development, fashioned out of the original which Vāk had created earlier, and which would then have, therefore, a prior claim to being considered the language of the other devas.)

What then is the raw material out of which this Vedic Sanskrit has been shaped? In other words what, in the words of verses 1 and 2 of hymn 10.71, is 'the corn-flour in a cribble', which was cleansed and made excellent and spotless? Where is it to be found and what is its nature? The RV itself answers these questions substantially.

Verse 8.89.10 may be taken as the starting point :

'तय् वाक् वदंती अविऽचेतनानि राष्ट्री देवानां निऽससाद मंद्रा
चतस्र: ऊंर्ज दुदुहे पयांसि क्व स्वित् अस्या: परमं जगाम ॥'

(8.89.10)

'When, uttering words, which no one comprehended,
Vāk, Queen of Gods, the Gladdener was seated,
The heaven's four regions drew forth drink and vigour :
now whither hath her noblest portion vanished ?' (8.89.10)

The explanation that this refers to rain and thunder seems to me rather crude, and in any case leaves many things without clarification. Can the 'noblest portion' here mean thunder, and is the latter to be understood as 'words' ('words', not just sound) uttered (that is spoken !) by Vāk, the Devi ? This is childish. Clearly it refers to the existence of an earlier fully formed language (with words) used in former rituals, which had fallen out of use with changes in culture and language

There are two verses in hymn 1.164, (its importance as a whole is well-known), which are also relevant here. They are 1.164.10 and 1.164.37 :

> ' तिस्रः मातॄः त्रीन् पितॄन् बिभ्रत् एकः ऊर्ध्वः तस्थौ न ईं अव ग्लपयंति
> मंत्रयंते दिवः अमुष्य पृष्ठे विश्वऽविदं वाचं अविश्वऽमिन्वां '
>
> (1.164.10)

> ' Bearing three Mothers and three Fathers, single
> he stood erect ; they never make him weary.
>
> There on the pitch of heaven they speak together
> in speech all-knowing but not all-impelling.'
>
> (1.164.10)

The first line refers to Agni, the 'Pillar of Fire' who stood erect between heaven and earth with antarikṣa in-between supporting them all. To translate 'aviśvaminvām (अविश्वमिन्वां) as 'not all impelling' may be technically correct, but is not meaningful. It is better rendered as 'not extending to all', or better as 'not known to all'. Here, then, we have the confession that the original language of the devas was not understood by the Ṛṣis of the Rg Veda.

4

Verse 1.164.37 reads :

‘ न वि जानामि यत्ऽइव इदं अस्मि निण्य: संऽनद्ध मनसा चरामि
यदा मा आ अगन् प्रथमऽजा: ऋतस्य आत् इत् वाच: अश्नुवे भागं
अस्या: ॥ ’
(1.164.37)

‘ What thing I truly am, I know not clearly ;
mysterious, fettered in my mind I wander.
When the first-born of Holy Law approached me,
then of this speech I first obtain a portion.’
(1.164.37)

The first line is mystical and implies that the ṛṣi is in search of the identity of his inner self, the sacred texts not having revealed it to him, on account of the difficulties in language, as the second line says. Even Agni’s instructions, that is to say, the language as taught in these rituals, does not help him to penetrate their inner meaning fully, leaving many aspects as puzzles.

That there were severe linguistic—and ritual controversies—amongst the Rg Vedic people is clear from many passages. Some aspects have already been referred to in my earlier studies, for example, the Yātu-dhāna controversy over rituals. To proceed further, it is necessary to assign names to the two languages, the controversy over which is described in the Rg. Veda, without, however, assigning separate identifiable names to them. I propose to term the so-called ‘ refined language ’ of the Brahmans as ‘ Bṛhaspatiyam ’, since it is Bṛhaspati to whom its development from the concept of brahman is attributed, and the other, the earlier one, as Dāsyam, for reasons which will become clear later. (If Bṛhaspati is the Lord of Speech (1.40.4) of the new language, for Dāsyam the Lord is Vivasvān, 9.26.4). The same words, namely Bṛhaspatiyam and Dāsyam, shall apply to the two differing forms of rituals also. Though the two are closely inter-linked, discussions here centre on linguistic aspects of the controversy only, leaving other cultural aspects to be taken up later. Both the languages are, as far as the RV is concerned, revealed by Vāk, since every creature speaks Vāk (8.89.10) ; even stones speak it (10.94.1).

To start with, we have the term, brahma-dviṣ (ब्रह्मद्विष्) occurring about 13 times. It is usually translated as ' hater of devotion ', which seems to be incorrect and based on a wrong assumption, which even the Rg Veda does not make, namely that Vedic religion only constitutes devotion. What the Rg Veda does is to make a distinction between true devotion, namely to brahman, and false ones to other Powers. The appropriate translation for ' Brahma-dviṣ ' is hater of ' brahman ', meaning both language and worship (bṛhaspatiyam). Indra, Soma, Bṛhaspati himself, and Vāk are appealed to severally in these passages to kill, destroy and otherwise deal severely with those people who do not bow before the brāhmanās. Then we have the Yātu-dhānas, also of the class of ' brahma-dviṣāh,' against whom the curse of being pierced through their vitals by arrows directed against them (10.87.15) is invoked. They are called vācā-stenam (वाचास्तेनं), which clearly implies that a language dispute is involved here. As for the arrow, it also has an association with language forms, as a symbol, as I shall show separately later on. In 10.87.13, the 'Yātu-dhānas' are to be pierced with arrows, that is to say, they are to be injured by the curses hurled at them. There are other passages also which point to linguistic disputes. In 10.87.4, Agni's shafts (arrows) are directed against the Yātu-dhānas. In 1.167.3, the spear which the Maruts use in their war exploits is Vāk. In 10.23.5, Indra slew with Voice many who spoke in varied manners and contemptuous cries. In 10.53.4, a prayer is made to the effect that Asuras, who are enemies, may be subdued by that speech itself.

There are a number of passages which indicate that there had existed old traditions at variance with the new ones developed later by the Rg Vedic people. Verse 6.21.6 is one of those which makes this clear, and verse 6.28.7 shows that in replacement of these old ways, a new 'devotion' (rites, etc.) have been developed and offered to Indra, who now has changed sides, supporting these new-comers against his former worshippers (old traditions). The two verses are :

'तं पृच्छंतः अवरासः पराणि प्रत्ना ते इंद्र श्रुत्या अनु येमुः
अर्चामसि वीर ब्रह्मऽवाहः यात् एव विद्म तात् त्वा महांतं ॥'

(1.21.6)

'Inquiring after him, thy later servants, Indra,
have gained thy former traditions.

Hero, to whom the prayer is brought, we praise
thee as great for that wherein we know thou
art mighty.

(6.21.6)

'तं वः धिया नव्यस्या शविष्ठं प्रत्नं प्रत्नऽवत् परिऽतंसयध्यै
सः नः वक्षत् अनिऽमानः सुऽवह्मा इंद्रः विश्वानि अति दुःऽगहानि ॥'

(6.22.7)

'Him will we fit you with new devotion, the strongest
Ancient One, in ancient manner,
So may that Indra, boundless, faithfull Leader,
conduct us o'er all places hard to traverse.'
(6.22.7)

It is clear from these and other such verses that Indra was in former times,—that is before Bṛhaspati brought in new innovations, as 'bṛhaspatiyam' in the name of Brahman, and on behalf of the brāhmanās,—the leader, and god of the ancient people speaking the 'dāsyam language'. The new language and forms of worship of 'bṛhaspatiyam' was, it is clear, based on the old 'dāsyam' and was a development—a 'purification' as 10.71.1 puts it—of the old, and the principal innovations lay, according to the same passage, in words and language themselves. Some elements of this old language of 'dāsyam' are preserved in the Rg Veda itself as I shall show later on.

We may now revert to our discussions on the subject of Vāk. (The subject of conflicts between the old and the new language, worship, and traditions, and of Indra's role in them, will be continued in a latter study.).

Vāk, as I have said earlier, is not, at her highest, just heavenly Voice ; she is also the heavenly Light, Jyoti, the primeval Aditi. This is a unique concept of the Rg Veda, which runs throughout the text, and is most clearly expressed in Verses 8.90.15 and 16.

'माता रुद्राणां दुहिता वसूनां स्वसा आदित्यानां अमृतस्य नाभिः
प्र नु वोचं चिकितुषे जनाय मा गां अनागां अदितिं वधिष्ट ॥'
(8.90.15)

‘ वचःऽविदं वाचं उत्ऽईरयंतीं विश्वाभिः धीमिः उपऽतिष्ठमानां
देवीं देवेभ्यः परि आऽईयुषीं गां आ मा अवृक्त मर्त्यः दभ्रऽचेताः ॥ ’

(8.90.16)

‘ The Rudras ’ Mother, Daughter of the Vasus,
centre of nectar, the Ādityas ’ Sister—

To folk who understand will I proclaim it—
injure not Aditi, the Cow, the sinless. ’

(8.90.15)

‘ Weak-minded men have as a cow adopted me
who came hither from the Gods, a Goddess,

Who, skilled in eloquence, her voice uplifteth,
who standeth near at hand with all devotions.’

(8.90.16)

When the Rg Vedic ṛṣi asks for kine, or refers to kine, he is asking for light or Vāk, or knowledge (jnānam) in an even deeper symbolism. Such prayers for kine invariably include prayers for horses also, a symbolic expression for Power. This I have explained in my earlier studies, both in connection with the Aśvins, as well as Indra, whose horses have been clearly explained in a Rg Vedic passage as representing Light and Power.

The symbolism underlying the passages (1.7.2, 1.20.2, 6.20.9, etc.) which say that Indra’s horses (and sometimes car also) are yoked by a ‘ word ’ now becomes clear, (हरि. . . . . .वचःऽयुजा) (6.20.9) (hari. . . . . .vacah yujā). The car of Aśvins is also ‘ well-yoked ’ (manah yujā, मनः ऽयुजा) (8.5.2) ; their car is horseless (aśvinoh. . . . . .ratham anaśvam ; अश्विनोः. . . .रथं अनश्वं) (1.120.10). Aśvins are said in 4.34.9

to have formed the Milch-Cow and the pair of horses (apparently this refers to Indra's horses), and thereby they are brought into connection with Vāk also.

The symbolism of Indra's ' word - harnessed horses ' goes deeper still. Indra is the upholder of Heaven and Earth (as also is, significantly, Agni). Verse 6.44.24 exemplifies the case of Indra (' he held the heaven and earth asunder ' ; ' ayam dyavāpṛthvī vi a skabhāyat ' ; अयं द्यवापृथिवी वि अस्कभायत्). As for Agni, we have 10.31.8 (He is the Bull, the Heaven's and Earth's supporter ; ' uksā sah dyavāpṛthvī bibharati ' ; उक्षा सः द्यावापृथिवी बिभर्ति). Verses such as 10.141.8, and 10.125.6 help to clarify matters further. According to 10.114.8, ' Vāk has spread as far as Prayer, (brahman) ' 8, and ' that is as vast as heaven and earth in measure '. According to 10.125.6, the devi has ' penetrated Earth and Heaven ' ; ' aham dyavāpṛthivī ā viveśa ' ; अहं द्यावापृथिवी आ विवेश. (Vāk speaks for herself in this hymn.)

What is the word that harnesses the 2 horses (symbolic) of Indra, while at the same time he is keeping Earth and Heaven apart ? To start with, we have verses such as 3.55.15 and 3.54.7. Verse 3.54.7 clearly says that Earth (pṛthivi,) and Heaven (dyo :) ' speak to each other names that are united ' standing in one firm place ' (. . . . . .dhruve pade tasthuh. . . . . . . bruvāte mithunāni nāma ; . . . . ध्रुवे पदे तस्थु. . . . . .ब्रुवाते मिथुनानि नाम. . . . .). That is to say, the connecting link between earth (' p ' प from the first letter of pṛthivi) and heaven (' d ' द from the first letter of dyo) is pada (पद), which forms the base for speech. Verse 1.185.2 also makes this point even more subtly. And as for Indra, he. . . . . .leads as on foot. . . . . .eulogy' (padā iva pipratīm. . . . . . . .stutim) (पदा ऽइव पिप्रतीं. . . . . स्तुति . . . .). 'Indra comes to all . . . . from the high station in loftiest heaven' (9.86.15). 'sah . . . . viśvāh abhi sam yāti . . . . . . asya dhāma . . . . . prathamam padam) (सः . . . . . . विश्वा अभि सं याति. . . . . .अस्य धाम प्रथमं पदं) 'Indra's . . . . strong and secret dwelling' is in 5.30.2 ('padam asya . . . . ugram'; (पदं अस्य अग्रं . . . .). Indra has 'fixed heaven and heaven as with an axle to his car on both its sides'. (10.89.4) (yah akṣeṇa iva cakriyā śacibhih Viṣvak tastambham pṛthivīm uta dyām) (यः अक्षेण इव चक्रिया शचिभिः विश्वक् तस्तंभं पृथिवीं उत द्यां ।।). 'Indra fixed his axle with prayer prayed by our fathers. . . . . the Vasiṣṭhās invigorated him with 'Sakvari verses'. (7.33.4). '. . . . . . . brhmaṇā vah pitṛnām akṣaṃ avyayam . . . . Sakvarīṣu bṛhatā ravena . . . . .Śuṣmam adadhāt vasiṣṭhāh', 'ब्रह्मणा वः पितृनां अक्षं अव्ययं . . . . .शक्वारिषु ब्रहता रवेण शुष्मं अदधात् वसिष्ठाः'. 'This axle of Indra's car is a wonderful thing (6.24.3).

'अक्षः न चक्र्योः शूर बृहन् प्र ते मह्ना रिरिचे रोदस्योः
वृक्षस्य नुते पुरुऽहूत वयाः वि ऊतयः रुरुहुः इंद्र पूर्वीः ।।'

(6.24.3)

'The lofty axle of thy Wheels, O Hero, is not
surpassed by heaven and earth in greatness.
Like branches of a tree, Invoked of many !
manifold aids spring forth from thee, O Indra'.
(6.24.3).

This axle (akṣa) is then like the branches of a tree giving manifold gifts. What is this tree ? It is the tree from which heaven and earth were fashioned

(10.31.7 and 10.81.4). It is a tree which possesses plenty of treasure. (3.45.4, 9.97.53, etc.). Before proceeding further with examining this tree, let us see what happens to the bough (akṣa) of this tree referred to in 6.24.3. It becomes 'akṣara' in 3.55.1, 'The Great Eternal was born in the Cow's home at the first shining of the earliest mornings'. (That is Voice came first as 'akṣara' (uṣasah pūrvīh adha vi ūṣuh mahat akṣaram pade goh.).

In 6.16.35, it is 'the everlasting place (womb) of Agni's mother, and the seat of holy Law' (garbhe mātuh . . . . . aksare . . . . . . ṛtasya yonim) (गर्भे मातुः . . . अक्षरे . . . . ऋतस्य योर्नि). It is a 'fire that will never perish' (7.1.14), and it is Aśvins' never failing 'food' (1.34.4).

There are many more verses to this effect, pointing ultimately to the fact that the 'akṣara' is a syllable, and a primary unit of voice. For example, there is 1.164.24, which says that 'with aksara, they form seven meters', 1.164.39 asks a question, to understand the implications of which, we have to go back to the two immediately preceding verses, namely 1.164.37 and 38. The former has already been discussed. It refers to Speech (Vāk). The latter refers to the song aspect of Voice which goes backwards and forwards, and which is an Immortal thing born from the voice of a mortal, a human being. The question posed by 1.164.39 is : 'On what syllable of praise song, as it were their highest heaven, the Gods repose them' (that is the song)? (ṛcah akṣare parame vi yoman yasmin devah adhi viśve ni seduh) (ऋच: अक्षरे परमे विऽओमन् यस्मिन् देवाः अधिविश्वे निऽसेदुः). The answer is quite obviously 'ṛgm' (ऋग्म) from which we have 'ṛgmin', ऋग्मिन्, (meaning 'praising') in 1.100.4, for example. Some scholars have provided an alternate solution. They deem it to be the syllable which, from the Upaniṣads onwards, has come to be recognised clearly as the most holy, namely, Om. I shall accept that probability also, and show what different inplications follow from these two alternatives. The syllable 'ṛgma', however, follows naturally from the reference to 'ṛc' in the verse itself.

The tree mentioned earlier as occurring in 6.24.3, 10.31.7, etc. should be, therefore, only Vāk, who possesses and sheds innumerable treasures in the form of speech, song, hymns and so on. Verse 8.62.17, for example, clearly refers to Sarasvatī as a tree providing shelter and refuge, and she, as is well-known, and as will be demonstrated in a later study in this series, is the devi supreme of song. This brings us to some very intriguing verses, namely 1.164.21, 21 and 22. (It will be noticed that the next two verses, namely 23 and 24, clearly spell out the fact that the subject being discussed is akṣara and pada as appearing in various metres.)

'द्वा सुऽपर्णा सज्युजा सखाया समानं वृक्षं परि सस्वजाते
तयोः अन्यः पिप्पलं स्वादु अत्ति अनश्नन् अन्यः अभि चाकिशीति ।।'

(1.164.20)

'यत्र सुऽपर्णाः अमृतस्य भागं अनिऽमेषं विदथा अभिऽस्वरंति
इनः विश्वस्य भुवनस्य गोपाः सः मा धीरः पाकं अत्र आ विश्वे ।।'

(1.164.21)

'यस्मिन् वृक्षे मधुऽअद्ः सुऽपर्णा निऽविशंते सुवते च अधि विश्वे
तस्य इत् आहुः पिप्पलं स्वादु अग्रे तत् न उत् नशत् यः पितरं न वेद ।।'

(1.164.22)

'Two Birds with fair Wings, knit with bonds of
friendship, in the same sheltering tree have
found a refuge.

One of the twain eats the sweet Fig-tree's
fruitage ; the other eating not regardeth only.'
(1.164.20)

'Where these fine Birds hymn ceaselessly their
portion of life eternal, and the sacred synods,

There is the Universe's mighty Keeper, who, wise,
hath entered into me the simple'.
(1.164.21).

'The tree whereon the fine Birds eat the sweetness,
where they all rest and procreate their offspring,—

Upon its top they say the fig is luscious : none
gaineth it who knoweth not the Father.'
(1.164.22).

The following points are immediately clear : (1) The fig-tree is the home of Vāk ; (2) the fruits are source of songs, hymns, and speech ; (3) One bird that eats is the one who by eating these fruits creates its progeny of songs, hymns, speech, and that should be Vāk ; (4) the other bird, closely bound by bonds of friendship to the first is Agni, who provides the inspiration to Vāk. (In 10.177.2, the 'flying Bird who bears Speech in his spirit' is quite obviously Agni, and the same verse refers to him as 'Gandharva' in womb, that is Rudra, with a play on the word Gandharva, as 'gandha' plus 'arva', or one of sweet speech ; also hymn 1.164 itself in the last verse, namely 52, refers to him as the Golden Bird, (divyam, suparṇam vāyasam, दिव्यं सुपर्णं वायसं); (5) about the Father of the verse 1.164.22, there can be two opinions; the Bṛhaspatiyam people will hold that it is Brahman, appealing to 1.164.34, according to which Speech abideth in Brahman, whereas the Dāsyam people, pointing to verses such as 9.26.4, (where the Lord of Speech is said to dwell with Vivasvān,) or 1.96.2, (according to which at Āyu's ANCIENT call, Agni became Vivasvatā), or 10.65.6 (where the cow, namely Vāk, serves Vivasvān), and so on, make him out to be Vivasvān. (That such a difference of opinion exists in the Rg Veda itself is shown by contrasting verses, such as 4.20.5 and 1.130.4. In 1.130.4. we find Indra 'crashing down trees' (as also in 2.14.2) while crushing Ahi, whereas in 4.20.5, he is himself 'a ripe-fruited tree', as he is in 10.43.4 also. The explanation lies in Indra, the Lord of Speech, attacking 'the tree' (or Speech) of 'dāsyam', and protecting that of 'bṛhaspatiyam'). (Verse 1.164.20, as is well-known, makes its appearance in the Upaniṣads also, obviously borrowed from the Rg Veda, but with a different significance altogether.)

The simile which compares Vāk to the Fig-tree is worked up to a grand crescendo in hymn 10.97, which is said to be addressed to herbs, trees and plants in general. While on the surface, it may give this appearance, it, in reality, appears to be a great allegory about Speech itself. The key lies in Verses 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 13, 15,22, and so on of the hymn.

Verse 5, for example, says: 'the Holy Fig Tree is your home, your mansion is the Parṇa tree' (which seem to be echoes of the fig-tree and the suparṇa of 1.164.20-22). In verse 15, Bṛhaspati helps to effect the cure, that is to say, viewed as a part of the general allegory, he improves the speech. Verse 23 again, in the allegory view, merely appeals to the king that people who speak 'the bṛhaspatiyam' language should not suffer death penalties. The words 'aśvavatim' in verse 7 cannot mean 'rich in horses' for this is an adjective qualifying 'auṣadhih' (herbs), but in the allegorical approach it would mean 'power of speech'.

To conceal its references to speech, the Rg Veda utilises other similes and metaphors, besides the tree, the birds, the cows, the horse, the axle etc. which have already been discussed. Something will be said here of a few important ones, leaving further elaborations for later studies.

Hymn 10.125 (quoted in extenso in the opening paras of this study) in which Vāk speaks (or is made to speak) for herself is extremely important and may now be studied verse by verse. I shall comment only upon the very essential points, since a more detailed study would take up too much time.

In verse 1 of 10.125, Vāk establishes her importance for all the devas generally, and more particularly with Varuṇa, Mitra, Agni, Indra and the Aśvins. Her association with the Rudrās, Vasus and Ādityas as a group is a theme (it has appeared already in this Study when verses 8.90.15 and 16 were discussed) which requires a separate discussion. It will be undertaken as a Study all by itself later in this series.

As for Indra, enough has been said already in this Study, as also about Agni, the Lord of Praise, Devotion, and Prayer, the Eloquent One, who, in a sense, is a shaft or arrow of Vāk (11.87.4, for example), a subject which will come up again later. To Agni flows song, and Agni's tongue is the medium through which the devas express themselves. Through Varuṇa, (and Indra) Vāk confers on Rṣis the Power of Revelation, Thought, Song, etc. (Val. 11.6, for example). Voice, Vāk, helps Mitra—Varuṇa, as also Parjanya, to express themselves through thunder, when Maruts also are active. The Aśvins, as keepers of Time (see my earlier Study on the subject) are called upon to control the metre of song and hymn (8.5.3, 1.112.24, 1.182.4, etc.). Of the other gods, Maruts, the Singers, carry Vāk in their armoury, and their voice speaks treasures (of music) (10.77.1). Soma is the Lord of SPEECH (9.26.4, 9.101.5, etc.), and he 'lifts up his voice' to sing (9.30.1, 9.86.33, etc). Soma's song flows through Āp, the Heavenly Waters (9.68.8, 9.78.1, etc.), and from that comes the nāda (or song) of *nadis* rivers, flowing in orderly manner (of which full description is provided in the text and which will be discussed later) into Sindhu etc.

Vāk is, in many places and many homes (Verse 3), with no distinction as to Āryas or Dāsas. She showers on her worshippers treasures by way of jnānam, (ज्ञानम्). Without speech, and the gift of knowledge conferred by her, men cannot live (verse 4). She puts man in communion with gods (verse 5) and can make him a ṛṣi, a sage or a brahman. (It is to be presumed that this last applies only if men elect,—the opportunity to elect obviously existed at one time—the bṛhaspatiyam language). Vāk is so powerful that by mere utterance of appropriate words in appropriate manner enemies can be vanquished even as Indra destroyed the Dāsas and Ahi on occasions just by roaring at them. (It is to be presumed that here also only bṛhaspatiyam can be effective.) That is why Vāk is able to 'rouse and order people' for battle (Verse 6). As for her spreading over all space ('penetrating Earth and Heaven'), the concept follows from the all-prevalent Waters which are her medium of Song and Speech. 'Bending of Rudra's Bow, and making his arrows reach their objective effectively' are another matter. The arrows are aimed at brahma-dviṣ (the haters of brahman). This would make Rudra a brahman-devotee himself, which is extra-ordinary considering the cultural traits of Rudra, the impetuous wanderer, (1,114,4), the hunter with sharp-pointed weapons, conducting hostilities with every one with success, (7.46.1), and being a constant threat to every one (7.46.3 and 4). He is, as I have pointed out in an earlier study, the Gandharva, who as Kāma, is rather promiscuous and uses his flowery arrows in the field of love rather than war. These are in no way consonant with what is expected of Brahman-worshippers. To some extent, a reconciliation is effected by making Rudra, the Lord of Sacrifice (1.43.4), but 8.13.20 makes it quite clear that 'Rudra, rash and of strong mind in ancient ways moves conscious' (rudrasya cetati yahvam pratneṣu dhāmasu) (रुद्रस्य चेतति यह्वं प्रत्नेषु धामसु), that is, he is a god of ancient times prior to the new innovations introduced by Bṛhaspati. This is obviously an attempt to absorb and supersede earlier gods and rituals. But that still does not explain why Vāk is brought into the picture.

This is done for two reasons. Firstly, the dispute, as I have already mentioned, is about language, the brahma-hater (bṛhama-dviṣ) being opposed to the old dāsyam language. So now Rudra, who like Indra, was formerly a patron of dāsyam now becomes one of bṛhaspatiyam.

Secondly, all this talk of bows and arrows being weapons of war has, underlying its superficial meaning, a figurative sense. The bow and arrow are symbolic of Vāk, or rather of her manifestation as instrumental music. Verse 8.66.11 equips Indra with a bow, which 'increases sweetness for him who drinks the sweet', (ṛdupe ṛduvṛdha ऋदुपे ऋदुवृधा), which is certainly more connected with music than war. Whatever objections one may have to this interpretation should diminish on reading 9.99.1, or 9.69.1, where the release of the arrow from the bow is compared to singing. Verse 2.24.8, which concerns Bṛhaspati, is also very revealing :

' ऋतज्येन क्षिप्रेण ब्रह्मणः पतिः यत्र वष्टि प्रतत् अश्नोति धन्वना।
तस्य साध्वीः इषवः याभिः अस्यति नृऽचक्षसः दृशये कर्णऽयोनय ।। '

(2.24.8)

'With his swift bow, strung truly, Bṛhaspati
reaches the mark whate'er it be that he desires.
Excellent are the arrows with which he shoots,
Pleasant to see and reaching the ears of men'.

(2.24.8)

(I must confess that the last phrase 'pleasant to see and reaching the ears of men' has been preferred by me to the various other alternatives suggested by Griffith, as it is more in consonance with the text). The second line of verse 1.39.10 is also helpful.

‘ ऋषिऽद्विषे मरुतः परिऽमन्यवे इषुं न मृजत द्विषं ॥’

(2nd line of 1.39.10)

‘ Maruts, against the poet’s wrathful enemy send ye an enemy like a dart (arrow) ’.

(2nd line of 1.39.10)

The bow of Rudra in 10.125.6 to which I come back is, therefore, an instrument of music, and Vāk has the power to make even music serve as a weapon. In verse 7, she claims that, on the world’s summit, she brings the Father, which apparently means that when she reaches the height of her power through voice or song, she can make even the Father of creation (Tvaṣṭṛ, Bṛhman, Jyoti, Vivasvān or whoever else it may be) make his appearance and grant the wishes or desires of the worshipper. She goes on further to say that her home is in the Waters and the Ocean, about which I have already offered my comments.

Verse 8 is simple, in one sense, but if examined carefully, more can be read into it. It says, on the face of it, that Speech is nothing but wind, which is also the breath, but more profoundly it claims in effect that the Universe itself is a manifestation of Vāk, which would thus equate the latter to Jyoti. Jyoti is thus both ‘ Svar ’ and ‘ Śvan ’. (Light and Sound).

How and in what manner language is organised as speech, music and prayer-humns will be discussed in the studies that now follow.

RG VEDIC STUDY NO. 5.2.

THREE-AND-THIRTY DEVAS.

Quite a number of Rg Vedic passages talk of the devas being three and thirty in number. In about half a dozen passages, this number is expanded to 3339, expressed as $(3\times10)+(3\times100)+(3\times1000)+9$, which really comes to $(3\times10+3)+(3\times100+3)\times(3\times1000+3)$', the basic structure being $(3\times10)+3$, or $30+3$. The further elaboration by multiplying this basic figure of 30, by multiples of 10, was quite obviously made to reconcile the basic figure of 33 with the fact that there are more than this number of devas to be found in the text. Apart from this explicit statement about the number, there are many passages where the reference is elliptic. In all, we may say that there are well over 120 verses which have to be taken into consideration, including those passages which deal only with either the 3 or the 30 of the basic number. (For example, there is 6.51.2, which speaks of Three ranks or orders of devas.)

The Rg Vedic esplanation for this basic number relies upon the three-fold division of the Universe contemplated in its cosmology. There are very many occasions when the reference is made to a fourth region also, for example, ' svar ', the abode of Jyoti, Bṛhman or Vāk, as already pointed out in the preceding study, (RV Study 5.1). There are also passages where each of these three divisions is further divided into three-sub-divisions (1.108.9 and 10;

7.104.11, etc.). Nevertheless, the text is by and large consistent in the view that the Universe is made up of 3 sections, namely Heaven, Earth and the region in-between, termed 'antarikṣa'. (See my studies in the second Series). Assigning to each of these regions, an equal number out of the 33 devas, it arrives at the formula of 11 (that is, 10 + 1) to each of them. It goes further and calls them Ādityas, Rudrās and Vasus respectively. In verse 1.139.11, eleven devas are said to be in heaven, 11 on earth, and 11 in Waters (which is the same as antarikṣa), and they are named Ādityas, Vasus and Rudrās respectively. Their chiefs are accepted as Varuṇa for Ādityas, Rudra for Rudrās, and Agni for the Vasus. So we have the classification of Varuṇa and 10 other Ādityas, Rudra and 10 other Rudrās, and Agni with 10 Vasus, making thirty-three in all.

Now, it is fairly obvious that this is rather a mechanical classification, the rationale of which is, in terms of Rg Vedic concepts themselves, questionable. There is no argument whatsoever to be found elsewhere in the Rg Veda for holding that there are eleven each of Ādityas, Rudrās and Vasus. In my studies in the first series, it has been shown already that the number of Ādityas, (who are devas presiding over the days) is in the Rg Veda 8 only. However, in the later Vedic texts, namely Śatapata and Aitreya brāhmanās, there are 12 Ādityas to represent the twelve months of the year. As for the Rudrās, the number 11 may be acceptable on the following grounds. Rudra is the lord of Vāyu and Vāta as already explained in my studies in the fourth series, and as such he pervades the whole Universe even though nominally his abode is in antarikṣa, as indeed Verse 1.101.7 says it is. Now as I have already explained in my studies in the second series, space is defined by ten points (Verse 1.164.10, 8,90.13, 10.90.1, and 8.61.8 confirm this). Hence, there would be some logic in stating that Rudras are 11 in number (1 Rudra + 10 points of the ends of the Universe under his dominion). As for the Vasus, there are in the Rg Veda only 8 in number as already pointed ot by me in my earlier studies, where it has also been shown that the text refers to Agni as the eighth Vasu. In this background, the correct grouping would be 12 Ādityas, 11 Rudras, 8 Vasus and two other devas to be still determined.

It is quite obvious that the Rg Veda is merely carrying a tradition far older than itself in referring to the devas as three and thirty in number, and has lost all rememberance of who these are, and why they are so definitely said to be 33 (or rather 3 + 30) in all. There are some Rg Vedic passages which make mention of old or former traditions.

In Verse 8.28.1, the three and thirty devas are said to be from 'times of old' (Griffith) ('vidan aha dvitā') (विदन् अह द्विता). Again, in 6.62.8, the Rudrās, Ādityas and Vasus are prayed to turn the dread anger of the devas, which has existed from times of old, against the opponents of the worshipper. What is the old tradition and how are the 33 gods involved in it? Verse 6.62.9 tells us that the opponents against whom the devas are to turn their anger are in hiding and are telling falsehood (apparently meaning either talking in some low language or spreading false rumours about old traditions) (asya droghāya cit vacase ānavāya) (. . . . . अस्य द्रोघाय चित् वचसे आनवाय). Verse 11 of the same hymn casts further light on the matter. It reads :

‘ आ परमाभिः उत मध्यमाभिः नियुत्ऽभिः यातं अवमाभिः अर्वाक्
दृव्हस्य चित् गोऽमतः वि व्रजस्य दुरः वंर्तं गृणते चित्रऽराती ॥ ’

(6.62.11)

‘ Come hitherward to us with teams of horses,
the highest the midmost and the lowest,

Bountiful Lords, throw open to the singer the
doors e'en of the firm-closed stall of cattle ’

(6.62.11)

(I would prefer Ludwig's ‘ the earliest, the midmost and the latest ’ for Griffith's ‘ highest, midmost and lowest ’). So, here we have horses and cattle in closed door stalls, and a singer asking for them. This seems to be the same case referred to in the preceding study, (Study 5.1), namely a quarrel about language.

The Vālakhilya humn 9.2 has also something to say on this. The first line (addressed to Aśvins) runs : ‘ yuvām devāstraya ekādaśāsah satyāh satyasya dadṛse purastāt ; ‘ युवां देवास्त्रय एकादशासः सत्याः सत्यस्य ददृशे पुरस्तात् ’. It has been translated as : ‘ The truthful Deities, the Three-and-Thirty saw you approach before the Ever-Truthful ’, and commentators agree that the Ever-Truthful is Sūrya. What are the 33 devas doing here, and how did they achieve this feat ? The explanation lies in the singing of hymns before sun-rise, and by implication the Rg Veda accepts that its three-and-thirty gods are lords of speech.

Verse 6.59.6 is also helpful :

> ‘ इन्द्राग्नी अपात् इयं पूर्वा आ अगात् पत्ऽवतीभ्यः
> हित्वी शिरः जिह्वया वावदत् चरत् त्रिंशत् पदा नि अक्रमीत् ।। ’
>
> (6.59.6)

Translated :

> ‘ Formerly, Indra-Agni, hath this Maid footless came unto those with feet.
>
> Stretching her head and speaking loudly with her tongue, she hath gone down thirty steps.’
>
> (6.59.6)

To translate ‘ hitvī śiras ’ as ‘ stretching her head ’ is not at all correct. Of the various alternatives suggested, I think ‘ without head ’ is the correct one as I shall show now, while explaining the meaning of this stanza. ‘ The footless maid ’ is Vāk (or Speech) who comes to human beings (‘ those with feet ’). ‘ Thirty steps ’ (padā) refer to Speech or language (please see my preceding study, number 5.1). Here, she ‘ speaks ’ only 30 padā (‘ gone down 30 steps ’), missing the three which are in the lead of the three-and-thirty gods. This is an elliptical way of referring to the three-and-thirty gods as padā or akṣarā (syllables or letters) of a language previously in vogue, but now gone out of use. (The remaining verses of the hymn further clarify this, but I do not go into it here. It is not essential for the present purpose.)

Everything, therefore, points to the three-and-thirty devas being in some way connected with the letters (padā or akṣarā) of the old language, the ‘ dāsyam ’ as I have referred in my preceding study (RV Study No. 5.1). Further testing is necessary and the text helps us to do so.

Already in the Rg Veda, the word 'Akṣarā' (अक्षरा, f) had come to mean both 'the eternal, the imperishable' (6.16.35, 7.1.14, 3.55.1, 1.34.4) and syllables or letters of speech (1.164.24). The word akṣarā (अक्षरा, f) also signified speech (7.15.9, 7.36.7 and 3.31.6). Verse 7.1.14 talks of the Imperishable Agni (Fire), and 3.55.1, of 'the birth of the Great Eternal in the home of the Cow' (mahat vi jajne akṣaram pade goh) (महत् विजज्ञे अक्षरं पदे गोः) which might also be translated as 'Vāk (the Cow) uttered the great words in her speech'. As for akṣarā, it is speech personified, and the prayer is made to Maruts: 'Let not swift Akṣarā neglect us'. (mā nah pari khyat Akṣarā) (मा नः परि ख्यत् अक्षरा). The Immortal devas are, therefore, also elements of speech, and the Three-and-Thirty devas can well be looked on as the aksarās, or letters of a language. We have now to see whether dāsyam can answer this test. (Though 'bṛhaspatiyam' is out of consideration, being the new and not the old tradition, nevertheless it will also be put to the test in the next study, namely No. 5.3 'Bṛhaspati').

In the cultural milieu in which the Rg Veda evolved, 'dāsyam' could, if it existed at all, only be a Dravidian language. The only branch of this family of languages with an ancient tradition of letters is Tamil, and only Old Tamil can claim to be the 'dāsyam' which we are in search of.

The most ancient work available to us on the grammar of Old Tamil is 'Tolkāppiyam' (which is also said to have had a predecessor named 'Aindryam', that is, 'belonging to Indra'). The form in which the text is available to us is, on a reasonable conservative estimate, probably not more than about 2200 years old, and even if this is stretched by about 200 years more, it still remains a very late work compared to the Rg Veda. But there are traditions which indicate that some of the rules have come from very ancient times, and it should not be surprising, considering the conservative nature of the love of literature and language of the people in this sub-continent, if there were some truth in these traditions. Sanskrit, for example, has retained its forms with comparatively little change for over three thousand years, and it did not appear to have resorted to writing for the first one of these 3000 years. Whatever methods it adopted, it must have been taught only in the environment in which it grew and developed, which was also the environment of the Dravidian tongue. So, there can be no serious á priori objection to any view which works on the hypothesis that the Tholkāppiyam description of the Old Tamil phonological structure—with which only we are presently concerned,—remained the same as described in the text, with some slight modifications a thousand years before its date. It may be mentioned that this has been the case for the two thousand and odd years that have elapsed since the text was composed in the form available to us to-day.

According to the Tholkāppiyam grammar, the structure of Old Tamil letters followed a pattern, made up of 12 vowels and 18 consonants, making a total of 30, to which were to be added 3 other subsidiaries (called 'auxiliary' sounds). The 12 vowels were called in Tamil 'Uyir', which means 'life' or 'life-breath', a term which could also be interpreted as 'produced by the sun', which is the source of life in the Universe. The 12 vowels, therefore, could be held to correspond to the 12 Ādityas.

As for the three subsidiaries, they were firstly 'Āidham', represented as .˙., and then two others, namely, 'kutriyalugaram and 'kutriyaligaram,' meaning 'short-u' and 'short-i' respectively. These latter were considered as requiring for utterance one-half mātra of time (mātra corresponding to the mora of Sanskrit) as against one for the ordinary corresponding pure vowels, (of which there are five, namely a, i, u, e and o) and two for the long ones (namely ā, ī, ū, ē and ō) and also for the two diphthongs, ai, and au.

The 'āidham' is a remarkable and ingenious device, being more of a sign, than an independent letter, and used for effecting changes in the sound of the consonants. (Incidentally, this indicates that a Tamil script existed as early as the 1st or 2nd Century B.C., if not earlier even.) As the 'āidham' has become a rare letter in Tamil for very many centuries, the exact modus of its enunciation is not clear, but some scholars are of the view that it had the power to convert hard unaspirated consonants (which only are described by the Tholkāppiyam) into aspirated or soft ones, depending on the way it was employed, thus eliminating the need for separate symbols for the aspirated and soft consonants. The form of the 'āidham' is three circles arranged in triangular manner (as .˙.), which immediately reminds us of the appearance of Rudra (or Śiva) with his three eyes, and which traditionally is the symbol of Rudra. The 18 consonants are further subdivided into 10 regular ones and 8 others, and the āidham is attached to the first ten. We have, therefore, the consonants divided into 11, (with the symbol of Rudra as their leader) and 8 others. Here, I would draw attention to verses, such as 5.29.8, which refer to Indra's drinking 30 lakes of Soma and eating 300 buffaloes (roasted by Agni, verse 5.28.7), the basic meaning of which is the same. They all refer to the 30 devas or akṣaras, of the three-and-thirty.

There is, it will be noticed, a close correspondence between these 33 letters (or akṣarās) of the Old Tamil script, and the 33 devas (or akṣarās) of the Rg Veda as demonstrated in the following diagram :

Sl. No.	Letters of Old Tamil Script. (Akṣarās)	Rg Vedic Devas (aksarāh)
1.	12 Vowels (Uyir)	12 (Ādityas) (Solar devatāh)
2.	11 True Consonants (with Rudra, or āidham, as leader)	11 Rudras.
3.	8 Irregular Consonants	8 Vasus.
4.	2 Auxiliary letters (short u and short i).	2 other devas.
TOTAL	33	33

There is, it will be noticed, a one-for-one correspondence not only in the numbers, but also in the characteristics of the items in the two columns. There is, however, some difficulty in identifying the two last devas.

In the Rg Veda, there is, as is well-known, an expression read as 'Vaṣaṭ' which is used as a solemn call when pouring oblations into the sacrificial fire, whose exact implications are not known. (In the later Vedic texts for example Aitareya Brāhamṇā, and the Taittireya Sahṁita, 2.1.7, 2.36.1, etc., a term Vaṣaṭ-kāra appears as the name of a deity.) Tentatively, I suggest that the term 'vaṣat' is derived from u + ṣad (उ + सद्), and that as the root शद् (śad) means, among other things, 'to perish', 'to decay', etc., the term 'vaṣaṭ' means that which 'destroys' or 'curtails' the sound 'u', whence 'Vaṣaṭ-kārah' would refer to the deva who accomplishes this. This would be one of the two deities of col. 4 above. (The A.B. actually suggests this). We can then equate 'vaṣaṭ' with 'the kutriyalugram' (short-u) of Tholkāppiyam, and by extension of ideas consider the term iṣṭi (इष्टि) (also an offering) as being a term similarly corresponding to the 'kutriyaligaram' (short- i-) of Tholkāppiyam. (I may draw attention to the fact that Agni as a consumer of oblations, and other things also, is said to have 'strong-jaws' with which he destroys things. In verses such as 5.7.7, Agni is an Axe, as also Bṛhaspati in 10.53.9, for example).

I do not press the analysis in the last para, but would nevertheless stress the remarkable correspondence, even without this discussion on vaṣaṭ, between the three-and- thirty devas (aksarāh) of the Rg Veda and the same number of letters (akṣarā) of Old Tamil script as described in Tholkappiyam.

There are, besides this, some other passages which also lend credence to this view.

In the Tamil language (Old or new), the base of Speech is the five primary vowels (aksarā), namely a, i. u, e and o, which generate the remaining seven long vowels, and these twelve by combination with the consonants create words and then speech or language. Excluding the 2 diphthongs, namely ai and au, there are 10 monophthong vowels, (5 short and 5 long) in common speceh. This concept seems to lie at the root of some of the passages which have not so far been satisfactorily explained.

I start with Verses 1.164.12 and 13, which read :

‘ पंचऽपादं पितरं द्वादशऽआकृतिं दिवः आहुः परे अर्धे पुरीषिणं
अथ इमे अन्ये उपरे विऽचक्षणं सप्तऽचक्रे षट्ऽअरे आहुः अर्पितं ।’

(1.164.12)

‘ पंचऽअरे चक्रे परिऽवर्तमाने तस्मिन् आ तस्थुः भुवनानि विश्वा
तस्य न अक्षः तप्यते भूरिऽभारः सनात् एव न शीर्यते सऽनाभिः ॥ ’

(1.164.13)

‘ They call him in the further half of heaven the Sire five-footed, of twelve forms, wealthy in watery store.
These others say that he, God with far-seeing eyes, is mounted on the lower seven-wheeled, six-spoked car ’.

(1.164.12)

‘ Upon this five-spoked wheel revolving ever, all living creatures rest and are dependent.
Its axle, heavily-laden, is not heated ; the nave from ancient times remains unbroken ’

(1.164.13)

The 'five-spoked' wheel of 1.164.13 are the five basic vowels which are 'yoked' with the other set of five (formed by lengthening of the basic vowels). They are linked by 5 axles, to form 'the wheel' of speech of ancient times, unchanged by usage.

As for 1.164.12, the term, परे अर्धे, (pare ardhe) need not necessarily mean exact half. Ardha (अर्ध) has in Rg Veda the general sense of portion or part. As for heaven, it refers to the abode of Ādityas, and by synecdoche it stands for the Ādityas themselves. This is further confirmed by the reference to the 'God with far-seeing eyes' (Sun) in the second line. 'Watery-store' (purīṣinam, पुरीषिणं), refers to speech, by the general symbolism which finds Vāk in Waters. Thus, we are to infer from the first line of this verse that it is referring to a language in which there are 12 vowels made up of 5 basic letters. (The second line of the verse does not refer to speech, but to the 6 seasons of the 12-month year, created by the sun, who is symbolically said to possess seven wheels.)

Verse 14 of the hymn brings together the two concepts of seasons and of speech of the preceding two verses into one. The 'ten' referred to therein may refer either to the 10 monophthong vowels, or to the ten regions of space. (I have in my earlier studies pointed out that Rg Veda looks at the limiting points of space as ten).

I shall now take up for comment the second line of verse 2.34.14, which has generally been described by scholars as very obscrure, with even Sāyana being forced to resort to very involved and unconnected yogic mysticism for an explanation. The relevant portion of the line reads : . . . . tritah . . . . panca hotn abr̥̄hiṣṭaye . . . . ā vavartat avarān cakriyā avase' (. . . . त्रित: . . . . पंच होतॄन् अभिष्टये आऽववर्तत् अवरान् चक्रिया अवसे), meaning . . . . . 'Trita has brought to aid us five terrestrial priests hither on his car', and the verse is with reference to songs being sung by the Daśagavas to help whom in this effort, Trita is said to have brought the Rudrās (earlier portion and verses 12 and 13). Now it is quite clear that the aid so rendered is for the construction of the songs and that the word 'cakra' here refers to speech. The five terrestrial priests can reasonably be inferred as the five principal vowels of Old Tamil. (Trita here is Trita Āptya, or Agni, though if it is taken in the literal sense of 'three' it reveals even deeper meanings). In verse 5.42.2, the Lord of these 5 Priests is said to be 'bliss-giving Asura, dwelling in oblations whose paths are open', which points to the Rudra-form of Agni.

Verse 8.32.22 is an intriguing one :

'इहि तिस्र: पराऽवत: इहि पंच जनान् अति धेना: इंद्र अवऽचाकशत् ।।'

(8.32.22)

'Over the three great distances past the Five
Peoples go thy way,
O, Indra, noticing our voice'.

(8.32.22)

Here again, the reference to 'voice' in the stanza, and to 'songs' in the next verse indicate that the numbers three and five here refer to speech. The term 'panca janāh' used in the Rg Veda is generally taken to mean Five Tribes of people, as Griffith has done in this verse also. But here at least (and in some other instances also) it cannot mean that. For then the problem of interpreting the 'three distances' will remain. To interpret 'pañca janāh' as 'five generating vowels' does not call for any violation of etymologies, for 'janāh' derived from root 'jan' (जन्) meaning 'to generate' or 'to create' can well be used figuratively to signify speech sound which is a form of creation. (Interestingly, verse 8.39.8, calls Agni, 'Lord of Seven-Fold Race of Men'.) This will become even more clear in my next study when I show the connection between 'three distances and 'five generating beings'. I would here only draw attention to verse 10.114.8, which talks of 15 lauds-ukthā, उक्था, and which is mostly concerned with activities of Vāk.

We have in 9.14.2 another intriguing verse :

'गिरा यदि सञ्वंधवः पंच व्राताः अपस्यवः परिङ्कृण्वंति वर्णंसि ॥'

(9.14.2)

'When the Five kindred Companies, active in duty, with the song,
Establish him, the Powerful',

(9.14.2)

The 'panca vrātā' (पंच व्राता) here certainly cannot mean Five Tribes or Companies of People. 'Being active in composing' songs, which is a more apt translation in this context, fits in very well with the concept of five basic units of language.

There are many more passages which can be quoted, but I shall limit myself to only one more, that being one of the most difficult and puzzling ones. Two verses are involved here namely 10.27.15 and 16 which read :

> 'सप्त वीरासः अधरात् उत आयन् अष्ट उत्तरात्तात् सं अजग्मिरन् ते
> नव पश्चातात् स्थिविऽमंतः आयन् दश प्राक् सानु वि तरंति अश्नः ।। '
>
> (10.27.15)
>
> ' दशानां एकं कपिलं समानं तं हिन्वंति ऋतवे पार्याय
> गर्भं माता सुऽधितं वक्षणासु अवेनंतं तुषयंती बिभर्ति ।। '
>
> (10.27.16)

> ' Seven heroes from nether part ascended,
> and from the upper part came eight together,
> Nine from behind came armed with winnowing—
> baskets ; ten from the front passed over the
> rock's high ridges '.
>
> (10.27.15)
>
> ' One of the ten, the tawny, shared in common,
> they send to execute their final purpose.
> The Mother carries on her breast the Infant of
> noble form and soothes it while it knows not '.
>
> (10.27.16)

At the outset, let me say that, practically entirely, this hymn is concerned with various aspects of speech, and a complete commentary would augment the arguments that now follow. (I do not propose undertaking the complete commentary here, but shall later have recourse to some other passages in the hymn to cast further light on what I have to say).

The eight which came from the ' upper part ' refer to the five basic vowels plus three more created by adding one more mātrā (O.T.) or ' mora ' (Skt.) to form ' plutas ' in song or prayer hymns. The seven are the vowels that remain out of the total twelve, when the five basic ones are excluded. The 'upper' and 'nether' refer to the fact that the seven vowels of two mātrās (or moras) are formed out of the basic ones which lie at their foundation. Eleven Rudras and 8 Vasus (of the old Tamil as per earlier analysis) together make up the nineteen of the second line of 10.27.15 (ten plus nine). The term 'sānu ..... aśnah' (सानु अश्नः) is translated generally as the 'rock's high ridge', which may perhaps be technically correct but misses the play on the word 'aśnah', which also means (in neutral) (with change in accent) 'eating' (from the root 'aś,' अश्, to eat) and here, by synecdoche, it stands 'for the mouth'.

It has to be pointed out here that in order to maintain the sequential nature of the numbers as 7, 8, 9 and 10, the poet has transferred one from what belongs to the Rudras to the Vasus, and what should have been expressed as 11 and 8 are shown as 10 and 9, without altering the total. That is why in verse 10.27.16, he is forced to talk of one out of the ten (dasānām ekam ; दशानां एकं) instead of one out of eleven, for this ekam (one) is Rudra who leads the troops of Rudrās in this scheme of things. (Elsewhere, no doubt, it is Indra whom the Maruts, termed also Rudrās, and sons of Rudra, follow). He is 'kapila', the tawny one, a colour usually associated with Rudra, (Verse 10.136.2 for instance prefers synonym, piśanga, पिशंग), and in the three-fold classification of Old Tamil letters, āidham or Rudra, leads the consonants. The reference to 'the Mother carrying the Infant on the breast, etc.' of the second line of 10.27.16, refers to the birth of Agni, who even in the womb, had as Mātariśvan laid the foundations of language.

Verse 10.27.17 may now be read :

‘ पीवानं मेषं अपचंत वीराः निऽउप्ताः अक्षाः अनु दीवे आसन्
द्वा धनुं बृहंती अप्ऽसु अंत पवित्रऽवंता चरतः पुनंता ॥ ’

(10.27.17)

‘ The Heroes dressed with fire the fatted whether :
the dice were thrown by way of sport and gaming ;

Two reach the plain amid the heavenly waters,
hallowing and with means of purifying ’.

(10.27.17)

Griffith’s translation may satisfy a grammarian, but it misses the figurative sense in which the words are used ; thereby the real significance of the verse is completely lost and it becomes a meaningless babble. The word ‘ meṣam ’ should be seen here as derived from ‘ miṣ ’ meaning ‘ to twinkle ’ or ‘ to blink ’ and, therefore, to stand for the “ eye ’. It would then be a synonym for ‘ akṣa ’, which also appears later in the verse, and which there means not ‘ dice ’ but eye and is at the same time, a pun on ‘ akṣara ’ meaning ‘ syllable ’ or ‘ letter ’. The word ‘ dīve ’ meaning no doubt ordinarily a dice-board here represents, however, the ‘ sky ’. Hence, the ‘ eyes ’ or ‘ meṣa ’ and ‘ akṣā ’ refer to the sun and moon, ‘ vīrā ’ itself referring to the devas. Now the sun and the moon are representative of Ādityas and Rudra respectively, the presiding deities of the Vowels and Consonants.

The second line confirms this derivation. So, in effect, the verse means : ‘ the gods created the syllables (vowels and consonants) as material for forming language ’.

This concept is carried further in the next verse (namely, 10.27.18) which reads :

> ‘ वि क्रोशानसः विष्वंचः आयन् पचाति नेमः नहि पक्षत अर्धः
> अयं मे देवः सविता तत् आह द्रुऽअन्नः इत् वनवत् सर्पिःऽअन्नः ।। ’
> (10.27.18)

> ‘ Crying aloud they ran in all directions : One
> half of them will cook, and not the other.
> To me hath Savitar, the God, declared it : He
> will perform whose food is wood and butter ’.
> (10.27.18)

Here, the key words are ‘ One half of them will cook, and not the other ’. The words ‘ pacāti ’ and ‘ pakṣata ’ can also well be rendered as ‘ develop ’, ‘ ripen ’ etc. Here, they signify that the first set can effect changes, which the other cannot. The reference to Savitar and Agni, who are here representatives of the Sun and Rudra respectively, indicates that the first half are vowels, and the second consonants. The fact that the first hemistich talks of the heroes ‘ crying aloud and running in all directions ’ confirms that the reference is to letters of the alphabet whose essential characteristics are production of sound in language.

The next, verse, namely 10.27.19, is also very interesting :

> ‘ अपश्यं ग्रामं वहमानं आरात् अचक्रया स्वधया वर्तमानं
> सिसक्ति अर्यः प्र युगा जनानां सद्यः शिश्ना प्रमिनानः नवीयन् ।। ’
> (10.27.19)

> 'I saw a troop advancing from the distance,
> moved, not by wheels but their own God-like nature.
>
> The Friendly One seeks human generations,
> generating, destroying, still bands of evil being'.
>
> (10.27.19)

There can be no doubt whatsoever that the troop here is the troop of letters (alphabets) and the Friendly One, namely Indra, determines what should be acceptable and what not, having in the first instance 'generated' the 'dāsyam' has later turned against it. (I have referred to this characteristic of Indra in 'the battle of languages' in the preceding study, namely No. 5.1.).

The three-and-thirty gods stand, therefore, for the corresponding number of letters (or basic sounds), of the ancient Tamil language system as defined in the Old Tamil Grammar, the Tolkāppyam, which itself is based on the still older 'Aindriyam'. We may perhaps have to look to the Maruts for information as to the Sanskrit phones, and this is examined in Study No. 5.5 later.

RG VEDIC STUDY No. 5.3.

IḶA SARASVATĪ AND BHARATI.

The three devis, Iḷā, Sarasvatī and Bharati form a closely associated triad with certain common traits. As a group of three they appear in many passages, in some of which one or other of them does not find mention. Sometimes another devi, named Mahi, (the Great) joins all three of them (1.142.9, and 9.5.8), or is mentioned with only Iḷā and Sarasvatī (1.13.9). Occasionally, other devis such as Hotrā, or Dhiṣanā or Puraṁdhi are also to be found in this company, but of these, only Hotrā exhibits some signs of closeness with the other three. It is clear that the main trait which holds the triad together is their association with voice as speech, song, or hymn. It is this which brings Hotrā and Mahi also into companionship with them. Hotrā is just a figment of poetical imagination, turning the celestial Hotṛ Agni into a devi to be in accord with the feminity of the three other devis, namely Iḷā, Sarasvatī and Bhārati who are seated together on the sacred grass at religious functions. Mahī is, on the other hand, no other than Vāk, who herself declares it to be so, in verse 10.125.8. Nowhere else do we find any mention of her. Vāk is the patron-goddess of all aspects of voice, and as such is fully entitled to be termed Mahī, the Great One, and to appear along with the triad, who only represent her several branches.

We need, therefore, focus our attention in this study only on the triad, Iḷā, Sarasvatī, and Bhārati, since Vāk, or Mahī, has already been discussed in the previous Study.

Bhāraii : Verse 2.1.11 identifies Bhārati with Agni as Hotrā, where Iḷā and Sarasvatī appear as the Aditi forms of Agni.

‘ त्वं अग्ने अदितिः देव दाशुषे त्वं होत्रा भारती वर्धसे गिरा
त्वं इळा शतऽहिमा असि दक्षसे त्वं वृत्रऽहा वसुऽपते सरस्वती ॥ ’

(2.1.11)

‘ Thou, God, art Aditi to him who offers gifts ; thou
Hotrā Bhārati, art strengthened with song.
Thou art the hundred-wintered Iḷā to give strength,
Lord of Wealth ! Vṛtra-slayer and Sarasvatī ’.

Agni who is present in the world as Vasu is also the Hotṛ at the yajña on earth as Bhārata (2.7.1, and 5 ; 6.16.45, 4.25.4, etc.), and in 1.22.10, he is the consort of Hotrā Bhārati. Vasu being the form of Agni on earth, these verses would justify Bhārati being treated as the fourth member of the divisions into which Speech (Vāk) has been classified in 1.164.45, namely the speech of the common peope. (This verse has been discussed in extenso in study No. 5.1.)

Iḷā : Iḷā (or Iḍā, the alternative expression for this devi) has a more complex personality. The 1st line of verse 2.3.8., which defines the specific and distinguishing functions of the three devis, reads :

‘ सरस्वती साधयंती धियं नः इळा देवी भारती विश्वऽत्तूर्तिः ॥ ’

(1st line of 2.3.8)

' Sarasvatī who perfects our devotion, Iḷā divine,
Bhārati all surpassing— '

(1st line of 2.3.9.)

We find Iḷā being called the divine as if she is superior to the other two. The significance becomes apparent from 3.55.13, (' Iḷā streams with milk of Order ', ṛtsya sā payasā apinvata iḷā,) (ऋतस्य सा पयसा अपिन्वत इळा) or from 9.62.3 (' Iḷā flows to us for noble eulogy ', (sustutim iḷām asmabhyam samyatam, सुस्तुतिं इळां अस्मभ्यं संयतं) or from 1.31.11 (Iḷā they made the tacher of the sons of men . . . . iḷām airṇvan manuṣasya sāsanīm . . . . इळां अकृण्वन् मनुषस्य शासनीं), from all of which we learn that this devi presides over hymns and eulogies, the highest form of Speech (in the view of the Rg Veda). Iḷā is in fact a word which, in 8.31.4, 3.1.23, 7.102.3, 3.59.3, 5.62.5, 8.32.9, and so on, also means Soma (7.102.3 specially) or sacred oblations which belong to heaven. Iḷā's normal abode is, therefore, heaven, the highest of the three regions into which the universe is divided (the fourth, the region of jyoti, vāk etc., being beyond the ken of men). From 3.23.4, we learn also that Iḷā's place at sacrificial seasons is the ' most lovely station ', meaning, as Sāyana says, the ' place of prayer and praise '. Verse 2.31.4 refers to Iḷā and Bhaga (the most gracious Āditya) as ' celestial ' (bṛhaddivā, ... बृहद्दिवा). Verse 4.50.8 introduces a controversy into the subject.

' सः इत् क्षेति सुऽधितः ओकसि स्व तस्मै इळा पिन्वते विश्वदानीं
तस्मै विशः स्वयं एव नमंते यस्मिन् ब्रह्मा राजनि पूर्वः एति ॥ '

(4.50.8)

'In his own house he dwells in peace and
comfort :
to him for ever holy food flows richly.

To him the people with free will pay homage—the
King with whom the Brahman hath precedence'
(4.50.8)

The controversy turns over the right of precedence between Kings and Brahmans, and whether the holy food, or perhaps prayer, (iḷā) requires to be sanctified or not first by Bṛhaspati to whom the hymn as well as the verses are addressed, he being the lord or chief of Brahmaṇās. This is also a symbolic way of referring to the concept that Bṛhaspati, as a deva, is the lord of prayers, hymns and praises, a function which he contests with, and takes away from, Iḷā, the devi. These aspects will be gone into in detail in the next study,namely No. 5.4, which is devoted to Bṛhaspati, but what is required to be noticed here is that, in the new scheme, there is this displacement of Iḷā from her ancient role of the presiding deity of prayer. (The very presence in the goddess' name of the letter -ḷ -or ḍ-, which are, as linguals, accepted without question as of Dravidian provenance, while the term 'bṛh-' is equally unquestionably accepted as belonging to the newly constructed language of 'bṛhaspatiyam', points to the nature of the disputations.)

Also noteworthy is the fact that in assigning spatial regions of control, as Heaven for Iḷā, Earth for Bhārati, and consequently antarikṣa, or in-between space to Sarasvatī, the Rg Vedic ṛṣis are observing here also the standard pattern of areas of control of devas and devis. Agni, it has been shown above, is, as Vasu on earth, the consort of Bhārati, and the Āditya, Bhaga, of heaven, the consort of Iḷā. It would follow from this that the consort of Sarasvatī should be Rudra, the lord of Vāyu, and Vāta, and the father of Maruts, all of anatrikṣa.

Śarasatī : Verse 10.30.12 takes us straight to the heart of the matter on the subject of Sarasvatī.

> ' आप: रेवती: क्षयथ हि वस्व: क्रतुं च भद्रं बिभृथ अमृतं च
> राय: च स्थ सुअपत्यस्य पत्नी: सरस्वती तत् गृणते वय: धात् ॥ '
>
> (10.30.12)

> ' For, wealthy Waters, ye control all treasures ;
> ye bring auspicious intellect and Amṛt.
>
> You are the Queen of independent riches.
> Sarasvatī give full life to the singer ! '
>
> (10.30.12)

The key notes presented here are : (1) Sarasvatī is closely connected with the heavenly waters, and (2) therefore, controls the treasures of which she is the Queen and which the Waters are capable of endowing, namely intellect and Immortality (Amṛt) ; and finally (3) she is the patron devi of singers. To these are to be added other traits, many of which are to be found in three hymns, namely 6.61, 7.95 and 7.96.

Hymn 6.61 furnishes the following information :

1. Her unbroken flood comes with a rapid rush and tempestuous roar (verse 8) ;
2. The waves burst through ridges of hills, for she is like one who is digging for lotus stems, and breaks banks ; and she is invited with songs and praises (verse 2) ;

3. She casts down those who scorn the devas, and those skilled in magic arts ; she has opened up rivers for men and made poison flow away from them (verse 3) ;
4. She fosters the intellect (verse 4) ;
5. She pervades the earth and the firmament (antarikṣam) (verse 11) ;
6. She spreads farther than her seven sisters (verses 9 and 10), and is swifter, more glorious and rapid than they (verse 13) ; and
7. Her seven sisters spring from 3-fold source, and make the five tribes prosper (verse 12)

Hymn 7.95 provides the following additional points :

1. She is said to be another Sindhu (verse 1);
2. Her course is pure from mountains (गिरिभ्य:) (gribhyah) to the ocean (verse 2) ; and
3. Sarasvān, the consort of Sarasvatī, is like a Bull amid the devis, and he gives fleet steeds, and provides armour for men going to wars (verse 3).

Hymn 7.96 augments the information with :

1. Sarasvatī is the most divine of Streams (verse 1) ;
2. She has Maruts for friends and on her two grassy banks andhasī, (अंधसी) are said to dwell the Pūrus (पुरव: pūravah), (verse 2) ;
3. the waves of her consort, Sarasvān, are laden with sweets and drip with ghee (verse 5) and finally,

4. Sarasvān (her consort) is said to have a beautiful breast (!) which swells with streams. (verse 6).

It is generally held on the basis of verses like these, that Sarasvatī is a river-gooddess, but it will be seen that there are many traits which do not find explanation in this simplistic interpretation. Clearly she has also something to do with song. Verse 7.96.3 and 6.61.2 can only mean that sweet music emanates from her (or her consort), which accords with verse 1.3.11, where she is said to be ‘ the inspirer of all gracious thought) and inciter of all pleasant songs ’ (codayitrī sūṇṛtānām cetaṅtī su-matīnam ; चोदयत्री सूनृतानां सुऽमतीनां) (perhaps a pun is intended here in the word sūnṛta since nṛta means dance also.) Verse 2.3.8 which says that Sarasvatī ‘ perfects devotions ’ (sādhayantī dhiyam, साधयंती धियं, cannot refer to a mere river, however holy it may be. That applies to 17.35.1 too which beseeches Sarasvatī ‘ to be gracious and provide Holy Thoughts ’.

We must take notice here of statements identifying Sarasvatī with Sindhu, in verses such as 7.95.1 (sindhu . . . . anyā, सिन्धु अन्या) which refers to Sarasvatī as ‘ another indhu ’, or 6.52.6, which says that she ‘ swells with Sindu ’ (सरस्वती सिंधुऽभिः पिन्वमाना, Sarasvatī sindhubhih pinvamānā). About Sindhu itself hymn 10.75 (the so called Rivers Hymn) has this to say along with many other pieces of information about rivers in general :

1. The rivers come forward triply, seven and seven (sapta sapta tredha . . . . सप्त सप्त त्रेधा), and the Waters come from Vivasvān’s place, with Sindhu surpassing all others in might (verse 1) ;

2. Sindhu speeds over precipitous ridges of the earth (verse 2) ;
3. Sindhu is a Bull, whose roar rises to heaven above the earth with a flash of light, and is like floods of rain pouring down with thunder (verse 3) ;
4. Roaring rivers run to Sindhu like mothers to their calves, like milch-kine with their milk (verse 4) ; and
5. She has yoked her car, light-rolling, drawn by steeds, (verse 9).

(In the other four verses of this hymn, along with other matters, the names of the 21 rivers referred to in verse 1, are given, amongst which Gangā, Yamunā, and Sarasvatī also appear. Here also Sindhu and the rivers appear in the role of singers, themselves and patrons of song and of songsters.)

Before proceeding to other characteristics of Sindhu and the rivers, there is a question which we must face immediately.

Granting that Sarasvatī, and Sindhu (and also the other 19 rivers mentioned in hymn 10.75) are treated as divine devis (goddesses), did they become so because of the divine quality of song possessed by them, or did the songs become divine because they rush, roar, bellow, and sound like rivers ? That is to say, which of these two is to be considered primary and which secondary ?

I think the answer is clear : The majesty and soul-stirring trait of songs made men consider them as divine, and they found in rivers an apt symbol to represent song, and divine sound. In my earlier study, namely Study No. 5.1, I have already drawn attention to the fact that in Rg Vedic thought song and prayers, as outputs of Vāk, a constituent of the primordial jyoti, possess the same divine power as light, both (svar, and śvan) being merely two different manifestations of the same Eternal Mother, Jyoti. How true is the concept ! What emotions can music not stir in man, what passious can voice not raise ? Truly sound is the voice of god, and that fact men realised as long ago as we know.

The veneration attached to the rivers arise, therefore, from the symbolism which makes them representative of holy song, and by extension of thought, water everywhere is holy, being the earthly representative of the heavenly Waters (āp). This is the basic, or fundamental, concept which provides validity to the various metaphors, similes and other figures of speech which connect rivers, ocean and water on the one hand with song, music and holiness on the other.

In this matter, the antarikṣa plays a very vital part in the Rg Veda, lying, as it does, between heaven and earth in the path of communication between devas and human beings. It is, as I have explained in my earlier studies, the region of the Waters, the source of all energy and power in life, which were the first manifestations of the primordial 'Jyoti'. This 'Jyoti' is the ultimate divinity, whose essence is unmanifested Light and Sound. The Waters flow in antarikṣa, and from there energy in the form of manifested light, sound and life-germs pours down on earth. The sun and the moon act as reservoirs of the Waters which store them in the first instance before their distribution in this manner. The sun is the reservoir of light for man, illuminating as it does all material objects including the stars, the moon and the earth. Similarly, the moon holds sound in store, and spreads it downwards. The moon also converts sound into Soma, the giver of Immortality which the devas drink from it as from a cup, leading to its periodic emptying and re-filling. The re-fill is supplied by the divine Waters, the ocean of the antarikṣa.

Various metaphors are used to describe the antarikṣa. For example, verse 7.33.9 talks of it as the tree which 'spreads a thousand branches', (sahasra valśam, abhi sam carati . . . . सहस्र वल्शं अभि सं चरति) and from which 'Yama spun the vesture which cloaked Vasiṣṭa' enabling him to be brought down to earth by the Apsaras. (yamena tatam paridhim vayantah apsarasah upa seduh vasiṣṭāh, यमेन ततं परिऽधिं वयंत: अप्सरस: उप सेदु: वसिष्ठा:). Here, the life-principle (elan-vital) is compared to raiment spun out of the threads floating about in the antarikṣa. Hence it is that in the next verse (7.22.10), Vasiṣṭa is said to have been 'a form of lustre' (vidhyutah jyotih . . . . . . विद्युत: ज्योति:). (This concept of weaving a web of life in the sea appears in 1.159.4, and elsewhere also.)

However, the more common figure of speech is to compare the antarikṣa to an ocean filled with Waters. I have discussed this matter in detail earlier, basing the view on verses such as 6.58.3, where Pūṣan is said to have gone in a ship over the sea of antarikṣa for his marriage with Sūrya's daughter. My concern now will be with how the Rg Veda further develops the theme comparing antarikṣa to an ocean or sea (samudra).

Verses 10.149.2, 10.190.1, etc., talk of the sea as being the place of origin of the World, when the water overflowed as flood. Verse 4.58.1 reads :

‘ समुद्रात् ऊर्मिः मधुउमान् उत् आरत् उप अंशुनां सं अमृतत्वं आनट्
घृतस्य नाम गुह्यं यत् अग्नि जिह्वा देवानां अमृतस्य नाभिः ॥ ’

(4.58.1)

‘ Forth from the ocean sprang the wave of sweetness : together with the stalk it turned to Amṛt ;
That which is holy oil's mysterious title : but the God's tongue is truly Amṛt's centre ’.

(4.58.1)

(Holy oil is Griffith's way of translating ghee.)

(Nāma, नाम, is better translated as ‘ Power ’, which arises from the fact that ghṛta, or ghee, is associated with semen in the Rg Veda, Agni's ‘ retas ’ being said to be ‘ ghṛta ’).

This is a verse over-loaded with many ideas. What concerns us here are : (1) Vāk appears from antarikṣa to reside with Agni, and speak through him ; (2) Vāk and Soma which also is produced from these Waters are Amṛt, that is to say, they have the power to confer Immortality ; and (3) it is the stalk which turned the Waters to Amṛt.

(As I have said earlier, in these Studies, for the time being all my references to Soma will be about the divine substance and moon only.)

Not surprisingly then ‘ songs of praise to Agni go to him like rivers to the sea ’. (8.44.25) (te samudrāya iva sindhavah girah vāśrāśah īrate ; तेसमुद्राय इव सिंधवः गिरः

वाश्रास: ईरते). (The phrase sindhavah girah used here appears to identify sindhus or rivers with song, and this requires to be specially noticed.) Verse 10.66.11 refers to Sindhu as the sea, (samudrah sindhuh- समुद्र: सिंधु:). Verse 1.71.7 compares 'all sacrificial viands' also to the rivers in a peculiar way. (Here 'sacrificial food' (pṛkṣah, पृक्ष:) seem to refer to hymns of praise, which are the food of gods, making them swell, as Indra does when the song of Soma flows into him. Verse 1.71.7 says : 'All sacrificial viands wait on Agni as the Seven Mighty Rivers seek the Ocean' (agnim viśvāh abhi pṛkṣah sacante samudram na sravatah sapta yahvih) (अग्नि विश्वा अभि पृक्ष: सचंते समुद्रं न स्रवत: सप्त यह्वी:). 'As rivers reach the sea, so, strong with praise, our holy songs reach him' (Indra) (6.36.3) (इंद्रं समुद्रं न सिंधव: उक्थऽशुष्मा: उरुऽव्यसं गिर: आ विशंति indram samudram na sindhavah uktha-śuṣmah uru-vyasam girah ā viśanti.) We find an extremely mysterious-mystic perhaps—concept expressed in 5.47.5. 'Waters stand, rivers flow' !

In passages like this, we find that the rivers are songs. When verse 1.190.7 says that 'songs of praise go to Bṛhaspati in torrents, as rivers eddying under banks flow sea-ward, whatever else it may mean, it also suggests an identification of songs of praise with rivers, and just as the river waters go to swell the sea, so do praise songs go to make Bṛhaspati happy. When the flow of Soma is compared to 'rivers running sea-ward', (9.88.6), and when it is said that 'he dips in the sea and the streams, and set in rivers with waters moves on' (9.86.8), and that he 'fills full the sea of praise' (29.3), when he is addressed with 'lofty lore of every kind' and is said to be 'the first to spread the sea abroad for Gods' (9.107.23), the ṛṣis in these, as in many other verses of this kind, are referring to Soma as the creator of the divine sound, which is heavenly music.

A number of word-plays are involved here. First of all, we have nadī, rivers, (नदी) making music (sound, or roar, from root, नद्). The two concepts are brought together in 10.11.2 (line 1) : 'Gandharvī spake : may she, the Lady of the flood, amid the river's roaring, leave my heart untouched' (रपत् धंर्वी अप्या च योषणा नदस्य नादे परिपातु मे मन: . . . . rapat gandharvīh apyā ca yoṣaṇā nadasya nāde pari pātu me manah :). In 5.74.2 we have 'kah vām nadīnām sacā', 'क: वा नदीनां सचा'), where 'nadī' is used in the sense of 'supplicants'. The word nadī figures in verse 2.35.3 both as a river and as a song. Only the full verse will make this clear beyond doubt. It reads :

'सं अन्या: यंति उप यंति अन्या: समानं ऊर्वं नद्य: पृणंति
तं ऊं शुचिं शुचय: दीदिऽवांसं अपां नपातं परि तस्थु: आप: ॥'

(2.35.3)

'Some floods unite themselves and others join
them :
the sounding rivers fill one common storehouse.
On every side the bright Floods have encompassed the bright resplendent offspring of the
Waters'

(2.35.3)

(The special emphasis on light in this context is noteworthy.)

I could quote many more examples to show how the underlying symbolism which makes songs into rivers owes its strength to the homonym characteristics of nadī (river) and nada (sound which is basic to song), but I must go on to other equally important aspects of the subject.

Amongst the many words for song in the Rg Veda, the vocable 'gir' (गिर्—गी:) is one of the more important ones, especially when referring to songs of an elevated type, such as praise or eulogy to devas. In many of the verses already quoted, the word appears in that sense, and there are nearly 500 other passages where also it occurs. Verse 3.7.5. for example, says: 'Whose (Indra's) lofty song must be honoured as if it were Iḷā'. Indra's fondness for Soma seems to arise, partly at least, from the fact that he is sung to by the latter (9.26.6), for he, like Agni, is a lover of song (1.10.12 and 2.6.3 respectively). In 9.71.3., Soma 'frolics . . . . and sings and bathes in streams,' etc. (There are over 35 passages—3.4.4, e.g.—for Indra, 2 for Agni and one for Soma to this effect). It is not necessary to quote more examples to illustrate this aspect, but what is propsed now is to show how the poets play upon this word to create new symbols, and new concepts. Let me refer here to verse 8.41.2 which says that 'songs and hymns were sung to Varuṇa who dwells at the source of rivers, in the midst of whom he has seven sisters', all of which connect songs with the seven rivers.

The vocable 'गिर्', 'gir', meaning song is derived from the same root, namely गिर्, meaning to praise, to swell, etc., as the other gir, गिर् meaning 'mountain'. The connecting thought seems to be that both swell up, or exalt and grow upwards (the mountain physically, and the song conceptually, either by rising in tone and note, or by exalting the person eulogised). This homonym relationship between the two is fully utilised in Rg Vedic poetic fancy. There is, for example, verse 9.62.15, where the phrase, ‘ girā jātah . . . . induh ’ (गिरा जात: इंदु:), is capable of being read, either as ‘ Indu born on a mountain . . . . ’, or as ‘Indu made manifest by song ’. (Both readings have been found acceptable to scholars).

A number of interesting information is provided in an indirect manner through this symbolism. Soma is a lover of song (9.64.14), and is himself a Singer ; (1.91.20, Soma gives milch-cow and steeds) ; (1.164.35- Soma is a stallion with prolific seed) ; (9.95.4 when Soma stalks are drained, hymns follow); (9.98.9, when bruised by Goddesses at the softest spot, Soma, Indu, roars aloud) ; (9.96.3, to Soma come cows, and milch-kine), and so on. That is why in so many passages, Indra is said to be addicted to Soma, and the latter is said to ‘ flow ’ to him. Now this Soma is mountain-born (9.62.4, 9.18.1, etc.) (गिरिजा), and mountain-haunting (9.98.9, 9.85.10, etc.). And Agni, (the lord of speech and so of Song also) is in the Waters (which flows to and from, that is mixes with, Soma, the Song par excellence). All other song-makers also, Indra, Maruts, Sarasvatī, Bṛhaspati and Parjanya are connected with ‘ giri ’, the mountain in some way or other. Indra is ‘ vast as mountains, spread on all sides ’ (1.37.7) ; his power supports hills, floods, etc. (8.15.2) ; he is followed by songs like a hill (1.56.2) ; for him mountains are like plains (6.24.8) ; he comes like a torrent from the hills (8.32.4) ; he is mountain-like (8.77.2) ; he clôve hills and cows issued forth (8.45.30) ; he is a mountain in strength

(4.20.6), and so on. He penetrated thrice-seven close-pressed ridges of the mountains. As for Sarasvatī, she comes pure from the mountains (7.95.2). The Maruts, singers, abide in mountains (8.83.12, 8.7.14); they made the mountans fall (1.37.12) merely by raising their voice as they went on their way; (1.37.13) they made the hills bow down and brought rain; they shook the mountains, and the heaven with the aid of stones (5.56.4), etc. When Viṣṇu is said to be a mountain-dwelling Bull (1.154.2 and 3), it is apparent that his love of music is meant thereby. Sarasvatī with her strong waves has burst the ridges of the hills, and requires to be helped with songs and holy hymns for slaying the Paravatās (6.61.2). In 5.87.1, it is said that hymns addressed to Viṣṇu are 'giri-jā', which obviously is better translated, especially in the context not as 'born on mountains' but as 'born in song'. There is no doubt that there is some connection between this act of Sarasvatī and of Bṛhaspati as described in 10.68.1, the hymns sung for whom are 'like birds keeping watch while splashing about in water, or like the loud (menacing) voice of the thundering cloud, or like merry streamlets bursting from the mountain'. Here apparently Sarasvatī has been enticed by Bṛhaspati to aid him in his 'language struggle' just as he had lured Indra also.

An indirect approach is also adopted. It lies in substituting 'adri', or 'parvata' which are synonyms for 'gir', the mountain, and linking them with 'gir', the song. There is another more interesting reason for this which I shall relate later. A still more subtle approach is, in these cases, to use the symbolic expression, 'rivers', (nadī) for song, or also kine, 'gau', (गौ:) which is an over-worked word in the Rg Veda standing for nearly twenty objects or things including voice or speech (and by extension of thought, song) as pointed out by me in the earlier Study, No. 5. 1.

In verse 1.62.3, Bṛhaspati is said to have 'cleft the mountain, and found the cattle (bṛhaspatih bhinat adrim vidat gah) (वृहस्पति: भिनत् अद्रि विदत् गा:), whereupon 'the heroes shouted with songs in trumph' (sam usriyabhih vāvaśanta narah) (सं उस्रियभि: वावशंत नर:). (Note : 'usriya' literally means 'cow', and hence in this context, it would also mean 'song'). In 1.7.3, Indra 'burst the mountain for the kine', that is, he released songs thereby. (Indrah . . . . gobhih adrim airayat) (इंद्र: . . . . . . गीभि: अद्रि ऐरयत्).

Before proceeding further, let me explain the special sense in which the ṛṣis are using the word 'adri' in these cases. The word can be derived from the root 'ad' (अद्) meaning 'to eat, to devour', and with the suffix '-ri' (-रि), it would become 'the mouth'. When verbal forms derived from roots such as 'īr' (ईर्) ('to set in motion') or 'bhid' (भिद्) ('to split', 'to burst'), etc. are used in such a context, they symbolically represent 'the opening of the mouth' or in other words, 'to speak', or 'to sing' or to recite. (Actually, this symbolism is a very deep one. The upper and lower part of the mouth are the ridges of the mountain, the former being 'sānu' is compared to heaven, and the latter 'arja' is compared to the earth. The mouth itself is antarikṣa, full of water, holding the tongue of Agni from which song—and curses also—flow. Hence, in 1.62.3, (where 'bhinat' appears with 'adrim',) and in 1.7.3, (where 'airayat'—from 'īr' is derived similarly), the connotation of singing or songs would be quite appropriately symbolised by words, such as 'gau', गौः.

Other examples of such symbolism will be found in verses such as 10.113.4 : 'He cleft the rock, he let the current streams flow forth'. (avraścat adrim ava sasyadah sṛjat . . . . . .) (अवृश्चत् अद्रि अव सऽस्यदः सृजत्). (Here, of course, 'streams' could refer to light rays also). We have another example in 4.1.14 and 15. 4.1.15 tells us '. . . . . they rent the mountains ; . . . . . they sang their song ; they found the light ; with holy hymns they worshipped' (. . . . . . . adrim . . . . abhitah abhi kāram arcan . . . . vidantah jyotih cakrapanta dhibhih ; . . . . अद्रि . . . . अभितः अभि कारं अर्चन् . . . . . विदंत ज्योतिः चक्रपंत धीभीः). This is followed up by the next verse, namely 4.1.15, which reads :

> 'ते गव्यता मनसा दृध्रं उब्धं गाः येमानं परि संतं अद्रिं
> दृळ्हं नरः वचसा दैव्येन व्रजं गोऽमंतं उशिजः विव्रुः ॥'
>
> (4.1.15)

> 'Eager, with thought intent upon the booty,
> the men with their celestial speech threw open
>
> The solid mountain, firm, compact, enclosing,
> confining cows, the stable full of cattle'
>
> (4.1.15).

(It will considerably help to clarify the whole matter if it is borne in mind that there is much reference in verses of this type to 'the battle of languages', which I have referred to in the previous 2 studies, namely Nos. 5.1 and 5.2.).

As for ‘ parvata ’ standing symbolically for ‘ the mouth ’, let me refer to verse 5.36.2, the relevant phrases of which say, (addressed to Indra) : ‘ . . . . may the Soma rise to thy cheeks and jaws like mountain-ridges ’ (. . . . . रुहत् सोमः न पर्वतस्य पृष्टे . . . . . . ruhat somah na parvatasya pṛṣṭe). The aptness of the symbolism will be fully appreciated if it is remembered that while ‘ parvatah ’ (पर्वतः) means mountain, rock, stone, etc., ‘ parvata ’ (पर्वत) stands for ‘ knotty, rugged ’, and ‘ parvan ’ (पर्वन्) for ‘ bones ’, and ‘ bone-joints ’, as well as for the ‘ junction of the two halves of a month ’, just like the closing of the two parts of the mouth. In verse 5 of the so-called Frog hymn (7.102.5), ‘ parvan ’ (पर्वन्) means the mouth (not ‘ every limb ’) as is clear from the context which talks of its growing when talking eloquently. (I reserve discussion of the so-called ‘ Press-stone ’ hymn, No. 10.94, to the attached Appendix as it requires explanation at length and deals with many other subjects. All that I say here is that in this hymn also, the ‘ adrayah ’ refers symbolically to the mouth. This would not preclude the meaning of this hymn as given by commentators usually, but for the fact that such an interpretation, namely Press-Stones, leaves many stanzas, such as for example, ‘ the ten when yoked ’ of verse 7, unexplained).

All this shows that the rivers rushing from mountain clefts, and the kine released from mountains, etc., are in many cases just symbols of song. When rivers are associated with Sarasvatī, or Sindhu or other devis, the basic primary meaning is that the latter are patrons of music and song.

We are now in a position to consider the significance of such numbers as three, seven, ten, fifteen and twenty-one when associated with rivers, and also the terms Sisters and Mother in the same context.

Verse 10.75.1 says that the rivers come 'triply, seven by seven', which gives a figure of 21, and the names of these rivers are (as I have already mentioned) spelt out in verses 5 to 8 of the same hymn. The verse reads :

(10.75.1)

'The Singer, O ye Waters in Vivasvān's place, shall tell your
grandeur forth that is beyond compare.
The Rivers have come forward triply, seven and seven.
Sindhu in might surpasses all the streams that flow'.

' प्र सु वः आपः महिमानं उत्ऽतमं कारु वोचाति सदने वि वस्वतः
प्र सप्तऽसप्त त्रेधा हि चक्रमुः प्र सृत्वरीणां अति सिंधुः ओजसा ॥ '

(10.75.1)

These two numbers, namely, three and seven, separately, or as twenty-one by multiplication, appear in the Rg Veda in several passages and in various connections. The figure 3 appears in over 130 places, and 7 in over 170 verses, but there is much over-lapping in these passages since the number 7 occurs mostly—not always—as a multiplier of number 3 to give the product 21, mention of which appears separately only in one passage namely 7.18.11 (with reference to Vaikarṇā, said to be a tribe).

The number seven is applied to many objects, concepts and things, but in a substantial majority of cases, it refers to, directly or indirectly, song. In the indirect sense, rivers are the most common, followed by sages, sisters, tones, tongues, cattle, etc., or even just Mighty Ones (5.43.1). The number seven is not multiplied by 3 only ; quite often it is multiplied (by plain statement or by implication) by seven, or seventy, or (in one or two passages) by nine.

The symbols for song are rivers, cattle, or steed as already pointed out. To the number of times that they are mentioned as seven, if we add the cases where song is more directly referred to as singers, priests, tones (notes) etc., we have almost the entire 170 or so passages signifying only the notes (or tones of song).

Verse 7.36.6 clearly refers to Sarasvatī (Sindhu) as the Mother of the Floods, etc., and verse 7 of the hymn provides additional information. The two verses are :

> ‘ आ यत् साकं यशसः वावशानाः सरस्वती सप्तथी सिंधुःऽमाता
> याः सुऽस्वयंत सुऽदुघाः सुधाराः अभि स्वेन पयसा पीप्यानाः ॥ ’
> (7.36.6)
>
> ‘ उत त्ये नः मरुतः मंदसानाः धियं तोकं च वाजिनः अवंतु
> मा नः परि ख्यत् अक्षरा चरंती अवीवृधन् युज्यं ते रयिं नः ॥ ’
> (7.36.7)

Translated :

> ‘ Coming together, glorious loudly roaring,—
> Sarasvatī, Mother of Floods, the seventh—
> With copious milk, with fair streams, strongly flowing,
> full swelling with the volume of their waters ;
> (7.36.6)

> ' And may the mighty Maruts, too, rejoicing,
> aid our devotion and protect our offspring.
>
> Let not swift -moving Akṣarā neglect us : they
> have increased our own appropriate riches '.
>
> (7.36.7)

Some of the important information we can gather from these two passages are : (1) there are seven mothers of rivers, of which Sarasvatī, or Sindhu, is the most important (river, or mother, indicating thereby that there are seven rivers and seven mothers of these sisters) ; (2) the Maruts are singers : (3) the goddess of Speech, Akṣarā, is, when manifesting herself as song, Sarasvatī ; and (4) akṣarā (syllables or letters of language) are primary elements (tones, notes) in song (so that there are seven notes and seven groups of seven notes on the whole).

In the hymn (No. 6.61) specially addressed to Sarasvatī, these matters are further elaborated. Verse 12 of the hymn calls for a close look :

> ' त्रिऽसधस्था सप्तऽधातुः पंच जाता वर्धयंती वाजेऽवाजे हव्या भूत् ।। '
>
> (6.61.12)

> ' Seven-sistered, sprung three-fold source, the
> Five Tribes' prosperer, she must be
> Invoked in every deed of might. '

Here, the seven-sisters are seven elements (sapta dhatuh, सप्तऽधातु:) clearly implying seven notes of a song. The term, ' sapta jātā vardhayanti ', (which is taken by commentators as referring to ' prosperity of Five Tribes ') is, it appears to me better translated as ' made greater, (extended) by the five from which she is born'. Then the five here can be taken as referring to five basic vowels (akṣarā) which in singing are elongated. This would then avoid the induction of references to tribes into the discussion as this has no relevance to the context. What these five basic vowels are will be considered later as also what is the meaning of the term 'threefold source' or 'abiding in three worlds' (Wilson) ('tri-sadhasthā').

Some of the important verses where the term seven is applied to rivers are: 5.43.1 (the singer calls the Seven Mighty milch-cows); 4.16.3 (Indra has produced Seven singers in heaven); 4.19.3 (Vṛtra held up seven rivers); 11.71.3 (seven singers make Vāk's tones sound together in concert); 3.4.5 (seven priests' oblations came in settled order, ṛtena, ऋतेन); 9.86.25 (seven milch-kine glorify the tawny-one, namely Soma, and having purified him in wool, he the Sage, is impelled into the Waters' lap, that is to say, he sings); 9.102.4 (even at his, namely Soma's birth, the Mothers Seven taught him, that is to say, he learnt to sing); 10.32.4 (the herd's Mother, namely Vak, or Sarasvatī, is surrounded by seven-toned choir, 'abhi vāṇasya sapta-dhatuh it janah'); it may be noted that here, the term 'janah' quite obviously does not mean 'people', but governs the 'sapta-dhatu', the seven-notes; 3.6.2 (Agni's seven tongues); 4.5.6 (Agni has given hymns made up of seven elements); 9.10.3 (Soma is decked with milk, that is made to sing pure-toned songs by seven priests); 10.134.1 (Agni is 3-fold vratam with seven threads, tantam, and five divisions, yāmam); 3.1.6 (Agni went to seven sounding rivers (sapta vāṇī) who were neither clothed, nor naked, that is as sound, or voice of music, and the seven formed one, united as one, (yuvatayah sa-yonīh ekam garbham) ; 10.5.5. (Agni has seven red sisters) ; and 1.141.2 (Agni has seven mothers, and ten maidens serve him). The list is long and most beautifully varied, but I must end here with a final reference to 4.50.4, the only one concerning Bṛhaspati on this subject where with his seven-fold mouth and seven rays, he makes his appearance in his usual combative mood.

The main point is now clear. Songs, according to the Rg Veda, are based on seven fundamental notes which together form a unit (corresponding to, if not exactly the same as, our octave). (I shall call them octaves henceforth, as I shall show later on that they are structured more or less on the same lines as the octave of Indian classical music).

It follows from this that when these octaves are said to be 3-fold, or 7-fold, the reference is most obviously to the number of possible octaves. It appears that the songs (or music) referred to in the Rg Veda are usually of 3 octave length, the normal coverage of human voice, but extra-ordinary performances, either vocally or on instrument, seem to have extended it to 7 octaves also. Or perhaps this was just a concept, reached in thought by extending the basic three. And in one instance 9-octaves are also mentioned, quite obviously this being either a speculative concept, or perhaps there did exist instruments capable of reaching such a level. (Or more probably these 63 ganas of the Maruts refer to the total number of alphabets in Vedic Sanskrit, which, as is well-known, varies in number from Vedic School to Vedic school).

Various explanatory notes will be necessary as I proceed further, and they will be provided at the appropriate places. There is, however, one point on which I must say something even at this stage. There are a very few passages, where instead of seven, the number specified is seventy. This is a poetic embellishment reached by multiplying seven by ten, but meaning seven only, unless the context requires otherwise. Such for example is verse 12.93.15 where seven-and-seventy horses are referred to, which should, it seems to me, be read as seven-and-seven (meaning either 2 sevens or 7 sevens), if it is to make any sense at all. There are only one or two other cases of this nature, in which Maruts figure. In 8.46.26, for example, Maruts are said to come with ‘ thrice seven times seventy horses ’ :

‘ यः अश्वेभिः वहते वस्ते उस्राः त्रि सप्त सप्ततीनां ।। ’

(1st line of 8.46.26)

Here, seventy (being a poetic embelishment for seven) refers to the rays of the moon meaning thrice seven for the number of horses for the Maruts, meaning as many notes (21) of their song.

This combination of three with seven to connote 3 octaves of 7 notes each occurs in symbolic terms mostly (sometimes, however, in direct expression) so often that it would be tedious to quote all the references. Some of them are : 8.85.2 (Indra penetrated thrice-seven ridges of mountains, that is sang in seven notes of 3 octaves) ; 7.87.4 (the names of the Cow, namely Vāk or Sarasvatī, are three times seven, and they (padā, पदा) are in a secret place) ; (10.64.8 (thrice-seven wandering rivers) ; 9.86.21 (Soma poured out by three-times-seven) and so on. Verses which refer to more than 3 octaves are : 1.164.3 (5 Octaves), 8.28.5 (4 Octaves), 5.52.17 (7 Octaves of Maruts), 1.164.41, (1, 2, 4, 8 or 9 Octaves of Vāk or 63 letters), and so on.

In many of these cases a reference is also made in various ways to number five. One such is verse 6.61.12 which has been discussed by me in an earlier para of this study where I suggested that five basic vowels are referred to there. This is also the case in verses such as 10.52.4 (Agni is 5-wayed, 3-fold and 7-headed), or 10.124.1 (Agni is 3-fold with 7 threads in 5 Divisions) ; 2.40.3 (Soma and Pūṣan in 7 wheeled car with 5 reins) etc. The five basic vowels in Old Tamil (dāsyam) are a, i, u, e and o, which, in normal speech, have seven longer counterparts in number, In vocal singing, however, these basic five vowels can be lengthened even further. In bṛhaspatiyəm (Sanskrit), however, there are only three basic vowels. a, i and u which only are theoretically capable of being so extended. Verse 1.164.12 clearly refers to the 5-vowels of ‘ dāsyam ’ (Tamil) as I have explained in the preceding Study.

Further information in regard to the structure of the old music forms of which Sarasvatī is the ruling deity are also available in the Rg Veda. I shall here discuss three such verses, namely, 12.28.4, 10.28.9 and 10.13.3.

Verse 10.28.4 is an extremely puzzling one and a brain-teaser whose meaning has completely eluded scholars so far. It reads :

(10.28.4)

‘ Resolve for me, O singer, this my riddle :
The rivers send their swelling water backward :

The fox steals up to the approaching lion : the
jackal drives the wild-boar from the brush-wood ’

‘ इदं सु मे जरितः आ चिकिद्धि प्रतिऽइपं शापं नद्यः वहंति
लोपाशः सिहं प्रत्यंचं अत्साः क्रोष्टा वराहं निः उतक्त कक्षात् ॥ ’
(10.28.4)

Here, the ṛṣi is playing upon words to indicate, in the form of a riddle, certain features of the notes of song or music.

The rivers swell as notes are sung, and the waters flow forward when the notes go on in the usual order, which in Indian musicological terms is called ‘ aroham ’, (अरोहं) meaning rising. When the notes are sung backwards, it is ‘ avaroham ’ (अवरोहं) and then the water may be said to be flowing backwards. The jackal (or fox) is lopāśah (लोपाशः), which, by a slight change in the sound ‘ p ’ (from unaspirated surd to sonant aspirated—‘ -bh- ’ (भ), becomes ‘ lobha-āṣah ’ or ‘ greed ’, and the hidden meaning of the verse turns out to be that ‘ greed makes a man an easy victim ’. The word ‘ kroṣṭā ’,meaning jackal, is derived from the root ‘ kruś ’ (क्रुश्) meaning, ‘ to call out ’, ‘ to make a sound ’, etc. ; ‘ varāh ’ : meaning a boar can be split up into ‘ vara- ’ and ‘ āha ’, where ‘ vara- ’ (वर) means ‘ best ’, ‘ most excellent ’, and ‘ āha ’ may be compared to ‘ āhū ’ (आहु meaning ‘ a call ’ ; as for कक्षात् (kakṣāṭ), from ‘ kakṣa ’ meaning literally brush-wood, it is to be noted that the word (kakṣa) means also ‘ arm-pit ’ or ‘ lurking place ’ which with a little extension of connotation, and poetic licence, may be made to signify the thorax from which sound emerges. So, now we have the phrase : ‘ the jackal drives the wild-boar from the underwood ’ becoming ‘ the best sound (music) is produced by voice which comes up from deep within the chest ’.

Verse 10.28.9 is composed in the same spirit and runs :

> ‘ शशः क्षुरं प्रत्यंचं जगार अद्रिं लोगेन वि अभेदं आरात्
> बृहंतं चित् ऋहते रंधयति वयत् वत्सः वृषभं शूशुवानः ॥ ’

(10.28.9)

Translated :

> ‘The hare hath swallowed up the opposing razor ; I
> sundered with a clod the distant mountain.
>
> The great will I make subject to the little : the calf
> shall wax in strength and eat the bullock. ’

(10.28.9)

The key to the first puzzle (in the first hemistich) lies in the predicate ‘ jagāra ’ derived from the root ‘ gṝ ’ (गॄ)), which is very close to the root gṛ (गृ) (to wake up) from which we have ‘ jāgar ’ (woke up) and root गृ also means ‘ to sing ’. The ṛṣi wants us to link, by an involved process, ‘ swallowing ’ with ‘ singing ’. (After all both are actions involving the mouth). The hare (śaśah) then is that which runs fast, meaning here ‘ a flowing song ’, and the razor (kṣuram) could then well stand for ‘ the sharp teeth ’ which when closed would hinder the flow of song. This is not intellectually very subtle, but neverheless the message is clear. The ṛsi says that the song flows from the mouth. No doubt ‘*logena*’ literally means a clod of earth, but here in this context it means some small thing and the word can be considered to have been aptly chosen to mean ‘a small thing’ since the confrontation is with a mountain, a huge mass of earth. In the Rg Veda, when the devas, principally Indra, cleave a mountain, kine and rivers, (light and sound) flow out. Hence this second puzzle in this verse also refers to songs. In the third puzzle, by ‘bṛhantam’, the ṛsi is referring to the great mighty one, namely, ‘Bṛaḥman’, which he says can be reached (experienced) (ārāt) (‘going’, from root ‘ṛ’,) through austerity (ऋहते), (an unusual word, apparently derived from ṛḥ, meaning becoming small, weak, emaciated, which happens when austerities are practised). The fourth and last puzzle of this verse refers, by ‘vatsa’, to the calf, the small beginning sound of music (a metaphor, quite common in the Rg Veda) which swells up (शूशु) into grand music subjugating the mighty devas, like Agni, and Indra (vṛṣabha) through the joy (‘vayat’ from root vī, वी meaning to enjoy) experienced by them.

Given that the Rg Vedic ṛṣis knew that song is at its best, when seven syllables (or notes) are brought to-gether in octave under strictly defined rules and order, and that the song rises in pitch (aroham) and falls (avaroham), it does not become difficult to interpret verse 10.13.3 whose presence in the Rg Veda is of all others the most extra-ordinary.

‘पंच पदानि रुपः अनु अरोहं चतुउपदीं अनु एमि व्रतेन
अक्षरेन प्रति मिमे एतां ऋतस्य नाभौ अधि सं पुनामि ।।’

(10.13.3)

(Unfortunately, all existing translations of this verse are thoroughly wrong, because of lack of appreciation of the underlying symbolism. The translation of Griffith is given now only to introduce the subject to the reader, and is not to be taken as correct. The comments that follow will clarify the position.)

Griffith' Translation :

> ' Five paces have I risen from Earth ; I follow her who hath four feet with devout observance.
>
> This by the Sacred Syllable have I measured : I purify in the central place of Order '.
>
> (10.13.3)

The ascending (aroham) and descending (padīm) which the ṛṣi talks of here are the rising and falling cadence of notes, which as we know are seven in number. Five notes take the song from the base up, and the same place is reached by falling back by four notes which is the musical rule here. The sacred syllable by which the purification (of the music) is measured, that is to say that by which the correctness of the tone sound is judged, is the ṛṣi says, -s- (स) of 'sam punāmi' (सं पुनामि). These rules and description of structure of the metre and of note-sound are exactly in accordance with the Indian classical system, where the notes in the ascending order are sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha and ni, and another sa, स, added at the end to complete the octave and provide the commencing point for the descent 'avaroham'. Thus, we have स रि ग म प ध नि स. That the fifth and fourth constitute the base of the melody is also indicated in the Rg Vedic verse 10.13.3

and when applied to these basic notes, we have sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, the rising melody ending with pa, which is also where the falling one, sa ni dha pa, rests finally. It is interesting to note that when these individual akṣarā are jointed the first four in twos as sa ri (सरि) and ga ma (गम), and the last three with a lengthening of da (instead of dha), in a group of three, namely padāni, (पदानि), the whole line may be read as meaning the flow of 'padā '.

It is clear, therefore, that by the time of the composition of the Rg Veda, the basic rules of the modern Indian classical music system had already come into being. The question that now arises, therefore, is why we have no evidence of its having been in vogue at all in the post-Rg Vedic period for over two thousand years till it surfaced in the earliest text of it which we have, namely the Bharata Natya Sastra. It is a fair presumption that during this long period of hibernation, it was out of favour with the elite brahmahical class, the culture-leaders and culture setters of the times, and the tradition was carried on by the lower classes, till it came to life again after many centuries. (I may, in passing, refer to the tradition, which is held in some circles, that the Veda, or its source literature, was in very ancient times, perhaps before the present redaction took place, sung not in the accentual poetic system as at present, but set to seven-toned music.)

What is the explanation for this ? Only in terms of sociology can this be answered, and I shall try to provide one in my next Study, namely Study No. 5, 4, which deals with Bṛhaspati.

RG VEDIC STUDY NO. 5.3.

APPENDIX.

IḶĀ, SARASVATĪ AND BHĀRATI.

RG VEDIC HYMN NO. 10.94.

Hymn No. 10.94 of the Rg Veda is usually read as addressed to the deified Press Stones of Soma juice, an interpretation which does not do much credit to the intelligence of the ṛṣis. This is no doubt the mīmṁāsic view, but, however sacred the Soma ritual may be held to be in these quarters, it certainly strains the credibility of even ordinarily reasonable human beings to be told that such objects require to be venerated in this manner.

In my view, this hymn is just an allegory, and is imbued more with a spirit of symbolic poetry than ritualistic religion.

The original text is placed below verse by verse along with the English translation (Griffith's) and my comments.

General Comments :

Before proceeding to provide verse by verse comments on the hymn, I may refer to the nature and type of symbolism, and figures of speech, metaphors, similes, synecdoches, etc., employed by the composer, and the kind of word-play adopted by him.

The stones here are, when the hymn is literally read, two pressing against one another, and crushing the Soma from which flows a continuous stream of juice. The latter, however, is a symbol for flow of song, and the two stones are the upper and lower parts of human mouth, being treated also as heaven and earth respectively. There are in fact, therefore, two sets of symbolism. One of them refers to human voice, emerging from the mouth, tongue and lips. The other refers to the heavenly music, (of the Waters) produced in the antarikṣa between earth and heaven, the music of the universe which is deemed to be contained within ten points defining its limits. Soma, the song, is compared to a river gushing out from the stones of the mountains when they are pierced. This is the central core of the allegory, and on this, the poet proceeds to compose a very interesting hymn. He succeeds extremely well in hiding the real substance of the hymn, the plain and direct meaning of the words used being completely deceptive.

Verse 1 :

> ‘ प्र एते वदंतु प्र वयं वदाम ग्रावऽभ्यः वोचं वदत वदत्भ्यः
> यत् अद्रयः पर्वताः साकं आशवः श्लोकं घोषं भरथ इंद्राय सोमिनः ।। ’

> ‘ Let these speak loudly forth ; let us speak out
> aloud : to the loud speaking Pressing-stones
> address the speech ;
> When, rich with Soma juice, Stones of the
> mountain,
> ye, united, swift to Indra bring sound of praise.’

This verse very cleverly indicates the nature of the symbols used and the purport of the hymn. As I have explained elsewhere, there is a play upon the word 'adri', meaning ordinarily 'stone or mountain', but which, if viewed as a combination of two words, namely the root 'ad' (to eat), and the suffix, '-ri', meaning 'pertaining to, or that which (here) eats', turns out to be a reference to the mouth. They are 'united' and sing praises to Indra.

Verse 2 :

> 'एते वदंति शतऽवत् सहस्रऽवत् अभि क्रदंति हरितेभिः आसभिः
> विष्ट्वि ग्रावणः सुऽकृतः सुऽकृत्यया होतुः चित् पूर्वे हविऽअद्यं आशत ॥'

'They speak out like a hundred, like a thousand men :
they cry aloud to us with their green-tinted mouths,

While, pious Stones, they ply their task with piety,
and, even before the Hotar, taste the offered food'.

There are, in this verse, a number of word plays. 'Green-tinted' mouths appear on the face of it to mean 'trees on mountains' (though not very elegantly), but in fact, they symbolise the mouths of the ṛṣis, who apparently were adicted to 'pān-leaf' chewing as has been the custom in India for many centuries. As regards tasting food before the Hotar, one word-play lies in the double meaning of the word 'food', which while referring on the face of it to Soma Juice, actually signifies 'songs of praise' (or flattery), which is the most enjoyable food for the gods. The Hotar is both Agni in the sacrificial fire and the human priest who is singing the hymn. Agni as Hotar possesses tongues in the fire, and is also the tongue in the human mouth.

Verse 3 :

‘ एते वदंति अविदन् अना मधु नि ऊंखयंते अधि पक्वे आमिषि
वृक्षस्य शाखां अरुणस्य वप्सतः ते सूभर्वाः वृषभाः प्र ई अराविषुः ॥ ’

‘ Loudly they speak, for they have found the savoury meath :
they make a humming sound over the meat prepared.

As they devour the branch of the Red-coloured Tree, these, the well-pastured Bulls, have uttered bellowings.’

The ‘ savoury meath ’ here is, on the one hand, the Soma, and on the other hand, the hymn which is being sung which is also the case with the branch of the Red-tree. The Bulls are to be taken as either the press-stones, or heaven and earth.

Verse 4 :

‘ बृहत् वदंति मदिरेण मंदिना इंद्रं क्रोशंतः अविन् अना मधु
संरभ्य धीराः स्वसृऽभिः अनर्तिषुः आऽघोषयंतः पृथिवीं उपब्दिऽभिः ॥ ’

‘ They cry aloud, with strong exhilarating drink, calling on Indra now, for they have found the meath :

Bold, with the sisters they have danced, embraced by them, making the earth re-echo with their ringing sound ’.

‘ Dancing with sisters ’ in this verse refers to the tongues (fire or mouth) dancing about to carry up either the oblations, or the song, to the devas.

Verse 9 :

‘ ते सीमऽअदः हरी इंद्रस्य निंसते अंशुं दुहंतः अधि आसते गवि
तेभिः दुग्धं पपिऽवान् सोम्यं मधु इद्रः वर्धते प्रथते वृषऽयते ॥ ’

> ‘ These Soma-eaters kiss Indra’s Bay-coloured Steeds : draining the stalk they sit upon the ox’s hide.
>
> Indra, when he hath drunk Soma meath drawn by them, waxes in strength, is famed, is mighty as a Bull .’

Soma-eaters, (producers of song) are the mouth on the one hand, and the antarikṣa on the other. By ‘ Kissing Indra’s steed ’ is meant the heaven and earth which are the limits of Indra’s body (in mythology) and of the lip-operation in the formation of words, (Indra’s steeds are yoked together by word in Rg Vedic mythology). Indra ‘ waxes (swells up) ’ in strength due to the Soma (song).

Verse 10 :

‘ वृषा वः अंशुः नि किल रिषाथन इळाऽवतंः सदं इत् स्थान आशिताः
रेवत्यऽइव सहसा चारवः स्थान यस्य ग्रावाणः अजुषध्वं अध्वरं ॥ ’

> ‘ Strong is your stalk ; ye, verily, never shall be harmed : ye have refreshment, ye are ever satisfied.
>
> Fair are ye, as it were, through splendour of his wealth, his in whose sacrifice, O Stones, ye find delight .’

The imagery is repeated.

Verse 11 :

‘ तृदिलाः तृदिलासः अद्रयः अश्रमणाः अशृथिताः अमृत्यवः
अनातुराः अजराः स्थ अमिष्णवः सुऽपीवसः अतृपिताः अतृष्णऽजः ॥ ’

‘ Bored deep, but not pierced through with holes,
are ye, O Stones, not loosened, never weary
and exempt from death

Eternal, undiseased, moving in sundry ways,
unthirsting, full of fatness, void of all desire .’

‘ Bored deep ’ refers, in the allegory, to the opening (wind-pipe-end or pharynx) of the mouth. The immortality, etc., mentioned in the verse, refers to the voice, song or heavenly sound, with certain exaggerations permitted in poetical licence.

Verse 12 :

‘ ध्रुवाः एव वः पितरः युगेऽयुगे क्षेमऽकामासः सदसः न युजंते
अजुर्यासः हरिऽसावः हरिद्रवः आ द्यां रवेण पृथिवीं अशुश्रवः ॥ ’

‘ Your fathers, verily, stand firm from age to age :
they, loving rest, are not dissevered from their seat.

Untouched by time, ne’er lacking green plants
and green trees, they with their voice have
caused the heavens and earth to hear.’

Here, the allegory refers to song as mountain as in the earlier verses, but in different verbal terms.

Verse 13 :

‘ तत् इत् वदंति अद्रयः विऽमोचने यामन् अंजः पाऽइव घ इत् उपब्दिभिः
वपंतः बीजंऽइव धान्यऽकृतः पृंचंति सोमं न मिनंति बप्सतः ॥ ’

‘ This, this the Stones proclaim, what time they
are disjoined, and when with ringing sounds
they move and drink the balm.

> Like tillers of the ground when they are sowing
> seed, they mix the Soma, nor devouring,
> minish it '.

Nothing special here which has not already been covered in the earlier discussion.

Verse 14 :

> ' सुते अध्वरे अधि वाचं अक्रत आ क्रीळयः न मातरं तुदंतः
> वि सु मुचं सुसुञ्वुषः मनिषां वि वर्तंतां अद्रयः चायमानाः ॥ '

> ' They have raised high their voice for juice, for
> sacrifice, striking the Mother Earth as though
> they danced thereon.
> So loose thou too his thought who hath effused
> the sap, and let the Stones which we are
> honouring be disjoined .'

The hymn ends with phrases which repeat the symbolisms. The evocation of thought is attributed to the Soma superficially, while what is really intended is the hymn of praise generated by devotion.

The whole hymn is typical of the poetic style of the Rg Veda. The literary conventions, and the loose type of word-play, are all such as are to be found in the whole of the text.

RG VEDIC STUDY NO. V. 4.

BṚHASPATI.

Bṛhaspati has some very unique traits distinguishing him from the other devas of the Rg Veda. Muir, and other scholars, have not noticed one trait of this deva, namely that he is an innovator, and a leader of one group in a ' war of languages '. This is clear from very many passages. For this purpose, if not for any other, the textual references to him require to be studied at some length.

There are nearly ten hymns wholly dealing with Brahmaṇaspati, as he is also termed. Besides these, there are nearly 80 isolated passages in the other hymns where he appears.

While calling on Agni to bring the three groups of gods, verse 7.10.4 asks him to bring also ' Bṛhaspati-All-bounteous with the Singers '. (bṛhaspatim ṛkvab, hiḥ viśvavāram ; वृहास्पति ऋक्वभि: विश्ववारं). This is the first step in the induction of Brhaspati into the language question, and here he starts by altering the former language structure to suit songs (hymns or lauds, as Griffith calls them) to be addressed to the devas. This leads to his becoming the Brahman Priest (brahmāṇam bṛhaspatim, ब्रह्माणं बृहस्पतिं), (10.141.3). He is wise (bṛhaspatim vṛtra-khādam sumedhasam ; बृहस्पतिं वृत्र खादं सुऽमेधसं), and foe-slayer (10.65.20).

In both these traits, namely speech and vṛtra-slaying, he resembles Agni and Indra, and he is equated with them in many verses. In 4.50.1, for example, he sits as Agni, and in 2.24.12, he is practically Indra, both being termed jointly as Maghavānā (maghvānā. . . . . indrābrhmanaspatī . . . . मघवाना . . . . इंद्राब्रह्मणस्पती). Like Indra, he performs deeds such as shattering mountains, destroying Vṛtra or Vala, or Paṇi, and releasing cattle and floods, etc. (10.68.10, 10.108.11, 1.62.3, etc.,) ; all of which signify, as in the case of Indra and Agni (as discussed in my preceding Studies), a role in the formation of language. While at the beginning he goes smoothly along with Indra in dealing with 'dāsyam' (or Old Dravidian-Tamil, vide my preceding studies), he later turns against Indra and succeeds in not only making the latter accept his innovations in language, but also in finally subjugating him and dominating him. As for the first point, namely Indra's becoming an apostate, my previous studies in this series provide plenty of textual references to establish it.

The best example for the second point, namely Indra being made subordinate to Bṛhaspati (Brahmaṇaspati, or chief of the brāhman community), is to be found in hymn 4.50, especially verses 7,8,9, 10 and 11, all five of which I quote here in extenso on account of the importance of the subject, and the trends they had set for the future developments in Hindu socio-religious history :

' सः इत् राजा प्रतिऽजन्यानि विश्वा शुष्मेण तस्थौ अभि वीर्येण
ब्रुहस्पतिं यः सुऽभृतं विभर्ति वल्गुऽयति वंदते पूर्वऽभाजं ॥ '
(4.50.7)

' सः इत् क्षेति सुऽधितः ओकसि स्वे तस्मै इळा पिन्वते विश्वऽदानीं
तस्मै विशः स्वयं एव नमंते यस्मिन् ब्रह्मा राजनि पूर्वः एति ॥ '
(4.50.8)

‘ अप्रतिऽइत: जयति सं धनानि प्रतिऽजन्यानि उत या सऽजन्या
अवस्यवे य: वरिव: कृणोति ब्रह्मणे राजा तं अवंति देवाः ॥ ’

(4.50.9)

‘ इंद्रः च सोमं पिबतं वृहस्पते अस्मिन् यज्ञे मंदसाना वृषण्ऽवसू
आ वां विशंतु इंदवः सुऽआभुव: अस्मे रयिं सर्वेऽवीरं नि यच्छतं ॥ ’

(4.50.10)

‘ वृहस्पते इंद्र वर्धतं न: सचा सा वां सुऽमति: भूतु: अस्मे
अविष्टं धिय: जिगृतं पुरंऽधीः जजस्तं अर्य: वनुषां अराती: ॥ ’

(4.50.11)

Translated :

‘ Surely that King by power and might heroic
hath made him lord of all his foes’ possessions,
Who cherishes Bṛhaspati well-tended, adorns
and worships him as foremost sharer .’

(4.50.7)

‘ In his own house he dwells in peace and comfort :
to him for ever holy food flows richly.
To him the people with free will pay homage-
the King with whom the Brahman hath precedence’.

(4.50.8)

‘ He, unopposed, is master of the riches of his own
subjects and of hostile people.
The Gods uphold that King with their protection
who helps the Brahman when he seeks his favour ’.

(4.50.9)

> ' Indra, Bṛhaspati, rainers of treasure, rejoicing at this sacrifice drink the Soma.
>
> Let the abundant drops sink deep within you, vouchsafe us riches with full store of heroes'.
>
> (4.50.10)
>
> ' Bṛhaspati and Indra, make us prosper : may this be your benevolence to us-ward.
>
> Assist our holy thoughts, wake up our spirit : weaken the hatred of our foe and rivals '.
>
> (4.50.11)

Here, we have the beginnings of a socio-political system in which the brahmin lords it over the kṣatriya, and these hymns propogate the concept wonderfully.

First of all are listed the benefits that would accrue to a king who subjects himself to the brāhmanās. He gains undisputed lordship over his people and his foes, and dwells in his house in peace and comfort. All that he need do in exchange is : (1) cherish Bṛhaspati, and adorn and worship him ; (2) help the brāhmans when they seek his favour and (3) give precedence to them at all times and in all places. Verse 11 makes it clear that in such circumstances, Indra, the pro-type of kings, and Brahmaṇaspati, the proto-type of the priests or brahmans, joining together in amity will shower blessings and prosperity on people. Verse 7.97.3 even goes to the extent of saying that Bṛhaspati ' created Indra as King (that is Guard) of Prayers, (of which he himself is the Lord). These verses have in mind Indra as the proto-type of the king, as verse 8 makes abundantly clear by referring to ' holy food flowing richly '.

It was Bṛhaspati (so claims hymn 10.67) who first instituted the sacrificial rites (verse 2), while introducing his language innovations (verses 1, 4, 5, 8 and 10 of the hymn). And this he did on behalf of the sons of Dyaus, the Asura, (apparently meaning Āryans as opposed to the Dāsas).

Verse 10.67.2 *reads :*

> ' ऋतं शंसतं: ऋजु दीध्याना: दिव: पुत्रास: असुरस्य वीरा:
> विप्रं पदं अंगिरस: दधाना: यज्ञस्य धाम प्रथमं मनंत ।। '

(10.67.2)

> ' Thinking aright, praising eternal Order, the sons
> of Dyaus, the Asura, those heroes,
> Angirāses, holding the rank of sages, first
> honoured sacrifice 's holy statute '.

(02.67.2)

Thus did yajna (यज्ञ:), the sacrificial form of worship as practised by Brahmaṇaspati first come into being under the tutelage of the Angirāses ; carefully thought out and wound round concepts of ṛta, (ऋत:), it was instituted by Brāhman priests (viprah, विप्र:), held to be sages, and belonging to the race which claime) Dyaus (Zeus of the Greeks, or Jove or Jupiter of the Romans) as their divine progenitor (namely, of Āryans).

Verses 1, 3, 4 and 5 of the hymn (10.67.1, 3, 4 and 5) tell us something of the linguistic innovations that followed :

I quote again all these four verses :

> ' इमां धियं सप्तऽशीर्ष्णे पिता न: ऋतऽप्रजातां बृहतीं अविदत्
> तुरीयं स्वित् जनयत् विश्वऽजन्य: अयास्य: उक्थं इंद्राय शंसन् ।। '

(10.67.1)

‘ हंसैःऽइव सखिऽभिः वावदत्ऽभिः अश्मन् मयानि नहना विऽअस्यन्
वृहस्पतिः अभिऽकनिक्रदत् गाः उत प्र अस्तौत् उत् च विद्वान् अगायत् ।। ’
(10.67.3)

‘ अव द्वाभ्यां परः एकया गाः गुहा तिष्ठंतीः अनृतस्य सेतौ
वृहस्पतिः तमसि ज्योतिः इच्छन् उत् उस्राः आ अकः वि हि तिस्रः
आवः ।। ’
(10.67.4)

‘ विऽभिद्य पुरं शयथा ईं अपाची नि त्रीणि साकं उदऽधेः अकृंतत्
वृहस्पतिः उषसं सूर्यं गां अर्कं विवेद स्तनयन्ऽइव द्यौः ।। ’
(10.67.5)

Translated, they read :

‘ This holy hymn, sublime and seven-headed,
sprung from eternal Law, our sire discovered.
Ayasya, friend of all men, hath engendered
the fourth hymn as he sang his laud to Indra ’.
(10.67.1)

‘ Girt by his friends who cried with swan-like
voices, bursting the stony barriers of the prison,
Bṛhaspati spake in thunder to the cattle and
uttered praise and song when he had found
them ’.
(10.67.3)

‘ Apart from one, away from two above him, he
drave the kine that stood in bonds of falsehood.
Bṛhaspati, seeking light amid the darkness,
drave forth the bright cows : three he made
apparent ’
(10.67.4)

‘ When he had cleft the lairs and western castle, he
cut off three from him, who held the waters.

Bṛhaspati discovered, while he thundered like
Dyaus, the dawn, the sun, the cow, the
lightning ’.
(10.67.5)

Comments :

Verse 10.67.1 : Aysya (meaning literally ‘ having mouthlike iron ’) was obviously the leader of the Āryas who first encountered the ancient ‘ dāsyam ’, (Old Dravidian Tamil) (the seven-headed, sprung from ṛta) and initiated those changes which led utlimately to Vedic Sanskrit, the base of the yajna (यज्ञ:) worship. As for the ‘ fourth hymn ’ (turīyam . . . . . . uktham . . . . तुरायं . . . . उक्थं) ‘ engendered ’ by him, it will be clarified in the discussions on verses 4 and 5 which I shall now take up, leaving verse 3 to be dealt with after them. (Incidentally, the phrase ‘ seven-headed ’ used in the verse may by noted. The concept of representing vowels of a language as tongues of serpents, Agni being a raging serpent symbolically, is seen here).

Verses 10.67.4 *and* 5 : (For verse 10.67.3, see after this.)

Bṛhaspati sought light amid the darkness, that is to say, he found ‘ dāsyam ’ (which he considered as ‘ falsehood ’, apparently meaning thereby both the language and the old rituals) unsatisfactory and so proceeded to innovate changes ; he started with ‘ the three ’, namely the three basic short vowels ‘ a, i, and u, of the old language, which constituted the foundation of its whole structure, ('they held the waters', as verse 5 says, that is to say, they stood as obstacles to the innovations) and he reconstituted their functions. In addition, he introduced a new vowel, namely 'ṛ' (ऋ) as the fourth instead of the short 'e', which along with the short 'o' he removed from the old syllabary. The phrase, 'turīyam ....uktham' is not here 'the fourth hymn' as it is generally translated, but 'the fourth letter', 'uktha' being derived from root vac, (वच्) meaning speech, word, etc. The Dawn, Sun, Cow and Lightning of verse 5 refer to these 4 new vowels.

Verse 10.67.3 *:*

The meaning of 'stony barriers of prison' now becomes clear as referring to the previous language, 'dāsyam' (Old Tamil), which stands opposed to these innovations. So Bṛhaspati had to thunder (that is, adopt stern measures to defeat the opposition), after which new hymns and songs were composed in the language that he had founded ('uttered praise and song when he had found them').

Verse 10 (10.67.10) *now completes the tale :*

'यदा वाजं असनत् विश्वऽरूपं आ द्यां अरुक्षत् उत्ऽतराणि सद्म
बृहस्पतिं वृषणं वर्धयंतः नाना वंतः बिभ्रतः ज्योतिः आसा ॥'

(10.67.10)

'When he had won him every sort of booty and
gone to heaven and its most lofty mansions,
Men praised Bṛhaspati the Mighty, bringing
the light within their mouths from sundry
places'- (10.67.10)

Bṛhaspati's reward was deification, and the language he founded, namely proto-Sanskrit, or ' bṛhaspatiyam ' as I have called it earlier, came into use amongst the elite class in various places. (It is ' the light within the mouth which men brought from sundry places ' as the verse says.)

Further information in regard to the syllabary and other aspects of this ' bṛhaspatiyam ', (the proto-Sanskrit) is rather difficult to find in the Rg Veda. One reason is that the syllabary of Vedic Sanskrit has been fluctuating even long afterwards, as we see from the various prati-śākhyas. Even at the time of the redaction of the Rg Veda there probably was no common agreement amongst the ṛṣis on the grammar and syllabary of this new language. Verses which indicate the syllabary as being forty-nine or sixty-three are perhaps those in which the Maruts are stated to be of that number, but it is not always so, and the number of Maruts very in the text. One thing, however, seems to be very clear and that is that in Proto-Sanskrit, the syllables were arranged in sets of seven. The vowels fitting into this system would be seven short ones as a, i, u, ṛ, lṛ, e, o and the longer ' ā, ī, ū, ṛ, lṛ, ai, and au '. These are at present only tentative suggestions, and should be treated as such till the researches which are continuing reach more definite conclusions. The statement made in verse 10.53.9 that Tvaṣṭṛ's axe of gold was sharpened and given to Bṛhaspati for cutting the blessed bowl of gods is also an indication of this.

Verse 1.164.23, 24 and 25 refer to the construction of Gāyatri, Jagati, etc., the various syllabic metres of the hymns, and says that " they fashioned ' them. (ni-ahakṣata, निऽअक्षत) (Verse 23), and 'he' measures out the praise song, etc. (verse 24). The verses, however, do not say who this 'they' and 'he' are. Perhaps we may be justified in concluding that 'he' here is the same as 'Ayasyah' or Bṛhaspati of verse 11.67.1 and the 'they' are the singers referred to in 10.67.2 and 3, since the whole of that hymn (namely 10.67) is conncerned with the innovations of language and rituals. Apparently, prior to the adoption of syllable-metric structure for hymns in the new language, song was constructed on the seven-note system referred to in the preceding study, namely Study No. 5, 3. The latter seems to have been rejected in favour of the former by the new elite, the Brāhman community, with the result that it had to languish for over two thousand years amongst the lower class till the resurrection came.

Bṛhaspati's innovations were not limited to language and rites of worship only. They extended to social matters also. For example, it led to changes in marriage and sexual ties also.

From 10.68.2, we learn that 'the son of Angiras brought Aryaman to us' (from the rest of the line, we learn that by the 'son of Angiras', Bṛhaspati is meant .... āngirasah ....aryamaṇam nināya jane .... आंगिरस .... अर्यमणं नियाय जने). Aryaman, it must be remembered, is the deva whose sphere of influence is marriage. The phrase 'he brought Aryaman to us' must, therefore, imply that Bṛhaspati had laid down certain rules and rites of marriage amongst the brāhman community of which he is the priest or lord.

This view is further confirmed by hymn No. 109. Whether this is based on a legend (as believed by scholars following Sāyana) or not is not important. What is more important is the information it reveals on (*a*) marriage customs and (*b*) the special privilege enjoyed by brahmans in the community. Verses 3 and 4 of the hymn reveals that there was an ancient custom of a bride being led to her husband's house by others, but that this custom was rejected by the brāhman community when they had re-organised themselves in the new set-up established by Bṛhaspati along with the new rituals of yajña (यज्ञन) (Verses 2, 3 and 6). It appears, according to verse 3, that the brahman community made a privilege issue of it, and incidentally also claimed that a Brahmacari (here apparently this is a word having the general meaning of one who pursues the way of life devoted to Brahmaṇaspati, or in other words, all brahmans) is deva (God) himself (verse 4). Elsewhere also, the same claim is put forward by the priests of having become devas since they had imbibed Soma. And elsewhere they say, that only they know what Soma is. It appears that, by Soma here they mean the Song ; the exhilaration produced by it is equated by them to mystical experiences generated by intoxicating liquids. (This is a subject more properly to be dealt with in a study devoted to mysticism and religion in the Rg Veda, which will be attempted by me later.) This same verse claims also the right of brahmans to determine their own ways of life, without being subjected to control by kings. The specious argument is put forward in verse 3 that the kingdom of a ruler is well protected by this code, and in verse 6, it is averred that Kings who observed this rule, providing for the privilege of autonomy for the brahmans became sinless, and were able to extend their kingdoms and live in peace and happiness.

On the whole then, Bṛhaspati's innovations and changes apparently set up severe tensions in the Society, and was probably both the cause and the consequence of the Ārya-Dāsa conflicts referred to in the Rg Veda. They certainly set in train a series of events leading to the development of the caste system, the first clear version of which is to be found in the Puruṣa-sūkta (Hymn No. 10.90). These are matters which I propose to discuss at length in a study in a later series.

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RG VEDIC STUDIES.

STUDY V. 5.

WAR, DANCE AND SONG.

Where there is song, there will be dance, inspite of the puritan spirit which is even more violently opposed to the latter than the former. Puritanism, however, is not a natural feeling, but one that is developed by a fear of life's exuberance, and the Rg Vedic people had not yet reached that stage. So, we have plenty of references to dancing in the text, and as is to be expected, it is associated mostly with war and fighting.

There are at least 18 passages which refer to dance. Of these, two are extra-ordinary, in that one refers to the earth as being formed by the dust stirred by the dance of the gods (10.72.6) (perhaps by Indra), and the other to the Dance of the Universe at the time of its creation by Indra (10.94.4 and 5, as interpreted by me in Study No. V. 3). Verse 10.18.3 makes mention of post-funeral dances, and two verses, namely 10.29.2 and 1.92.4 present Uṣas, the Dawn, as a beautiful dancer. Verse 6.63.5 describes the Aśvins as ' dancing heroes ', which perhaps is intended to see time as dancing away.

All the remaining 11 passages are concerned with the war-dance of Indra and the Maruts. In one, namely 8.20.22, the Maruts appear with their breast adorned with gold (apparently as armour plate), and in another, namely 8.24.12, Indra is called 'Lover of Song'. The Maruts march to war with jingling armlets and anklets (khādi), with golden helmets, and golden ornaments on their breasts, with spears like lightning in their hands and so on (5.54.11 and others). They march boisterously, singing and dancing, striking terror into man and beast on their way, and causing havoc to trees and earth as they pass (1.64.3, 5.60, 1.85.8, 10.78.3, etc.).

The association of song with war-dance is usual in all communities, and quite often the warriors are joined by female companions when so engaged. In the case of Maruts, three devis associate themselves with them, namely Rodasī (who brings them enjoyment, 5.56.8 or just stands besides them, 6.66.6, 1.167.4 and 5, and so on), Indrānī (who is their friend, 10.86.9) and Sarasvatī, the goddess of muṣic (7.96.2, 7.39.5, etc.). (One is inclined to suspect that all three are one, being merely the different forms of Agni as a female deity, that is Hotrā or Śakti; of this more in the next series).

In view of the foregoing, it should not be surprising if Sarasvatī herself became war-minded, and uses her powers against the opponents of the ṛṣis. This she does through magical formulae to break down vile magic (6.61.3 .... 'Sarasvatī deva nidah nibarhya ...... bṛṣasya mayinah' ..... 'Sarasvati, thou castest down those who scorned the Gods, the Bṛṣaya skilled in magic arts'). According to 10.75.9, Sindhu provides 'a car that wins booty in fight' .... 'sukham ratham yuyuje sindhuh tena vājam saniṣat asmin ajau .....' Sārasvat, the consort of Sarasvatī, 'decks the bodies (of princes) for success in battle '....... 'vi sātaye tanvam mamṛjih' (7.95.3). (Sarasvat, or another form of the name, Sarasvān, would appear to be Rudra as mentioned in the earlier Study. Sarasvatī is the friend of Maruts (7.96.2, 7.36.7 etc.), as may be expected. The relationship is between Vāk and Sarasvatī on the one hand, and Agni and Rudra on the other.

The last hemistich in verse 6.75.19 (the so-called Weapons of War Hymn) reads : 'My nearest, closest mail is prayer'. (......brhma varma mama antaram). This is not just a platitude, but a deeply felt expression. Coming at the end of a hymn, which is wholly devoted to appeals addressed to war weapons, it expresses a sentiment and a faith which pervades the whole of the Rg Veda, as has been fully explained in the Study of Vāk.

The popular belief that the Rg Vedic ṛṣis were gentle in disposition, devoting all their time to meditation is not quite correct. They entertained most unsaintly feelings of hatred for all who were not with them, and enjoyed a lusty fight as well as the next man. The battle was conducted not only with deadly weapons, including poisoned arrows, (6.75.15), but with the aid of black magic also.

There are many passages describing the musical instruments in use amongst the Rg Vedic people. Yama plays the flute (nāḷīh) in the home of the devas. (10.135.7) The instrument was apparently made out of Soma stalk, 10.94.8 and 9 (or lotus stalk) (somasya andhasa). The latter verse says that ofter draining the stalk, the devas sit on the 'ox's hide', (gavih) which apparently refers to the sky, as I have explained in one of my earlier studies. (If the term deva is taken as 'sound' here, this passage would seem to refer to 'drums' made of ox-hide.) Verse 6.61.2 terms Sarasvatī 'a digger for lotus-stems' (bisakhā iva) 'who bursts with her strong waves the ridges of the hills' ('śuṣmebhih arujat sānu girīnām'). This apparently refers to the powerful music emanating from the flute when played.

Then, there are references to other instruments also in 10.58.9-'gargarah', 'godhah', and 'pingah' which are thought to mean most probably the viol, the lute and the string respectively. But 'godhah' may well mean a drum, the ox-hide ('gavih') being an object known to these ṛṣis. As for the bow and arrow, in the hands of Rudra as Kāma or Gandharva Viśvavasu, it may well have been a sort of ancient violin, the relevant verses being capable of being read as symbolising such an instrument. (Verse 10.125.7, in which Vāk says that she bends the bow of Rudra etc., presents an interesting facet to the subject.) The veena (vāṇah from which the term veena is derived in the later Vedic literature) makes its appearance in 8.20.8 and 1.85.10. (The term vāṇah means, it must be remembered, also an arrow in 9.50.1.)

Finally we have in 1.117.21, the Aśvins 'blowing away the dasyu with their trumpet' ('dasyum bakureṇa dhamantā दस्युं बकुरेण धमंता), the word for the instrument being 'bakurah!' (The Walls of Jericho?)

RG VEDIC STUDIES

STUDY V. 6.

' THE POWER OF AGNI—SPEECH, PRAYER AND MUSIC '

Agni was born of Aditi, one form of manifestation of Jyoti, the other being Vāk. In addition, Agni, as Vivasvān, was the consort of Vāk. Agni in fact as Matariśvan was in the form of Sound in his mother's womb, which is a Rg Vedic etymological explanation.

Agni is in different situations an Āditya, a Rudra and a Vasu, in heaven, antarikṣa and earth respectively, and as such, he generated different aspects of human speech in an old tradition. Thus, the imperishable (akṣara) Agni became the letters (akṣarāh) of the old ' dāsyam '. Iḷā, Sarasvatī and Bhārati, the devis, presiding respectively over prayer in heaven, over music and learned speech in antarikṣa, and human speech on earth, are the consorts of Agni in his various forms of Hotṛ, Sarasvān, and Bharata respectively. They are his Śaktis appearing also as Rodasī for Maruts, and Rudra, as vajra for Indra, and aṣṭra for Pūṣan. (This will be elaborated in the next series)

In a newer Rg Vedic tradition, Agni appears as Bṛhaspati, the Father Founder of brāhmanic cult and culture and the originator of Sanskrit. Whereas Agni in his original form had acted as [redacted] friend of Indra, who was his equal and colleague in the process of creation, in the newer tradition Bṛhaspati as Agni first vanquished Indra and then made him subordinate to himself, which is a symbolical expression for the supersession of the prerogative, status and power of the rulers by the priestly order.

It is Agni who provides the Śakti of musical instruments in peace and war. The bow and arrow of Rudra is a multi-purpose weapon ; it is used in warfare, where its poisoned arrows play deadly havoc in the enemies' ranks, and at the same time, it is a musical instrument, which creates the most powerful erotic sentiments (kāma). The power of the trumpet of the Aśvins which can at one call blow the Dasyus away, and of the flute of Yama, is derived from Agni. Sarasvatī plays both the viol, (violin) and the flute which is made from the stalk of the lotus, where Agni resides.

Thus, Agni is present everywhere where Speech, Prayers, Dance and Music prevail, being the transmitting agent of the ultimate Power, both 'svar' and 'svan', that is Jyoti. The manifested World of sound is nothing but Agni.

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Mr. M. Sundar Raj, the author of this book, was born in Madras on the 1st December, 1918. He holds the M. A., degree of the Madras University, and was in succession, a teacher and an administrator in a financial branch of the Central Government in India, where he has held very high posts.

The present work is the result of extensive studies carried out over thirty years during his leisure moments. The central aspect of these Studies, which were not confined only to this branch of knowledge, has been always his native Hindu religion and culture. They have been pursued with one - pointed zeal, love and devotion. He has spent some time abroad in the pursuit of knowledge, believing always that it is only right knowledge which can lead to right action.

This is his first book, his earlier publications having been in the form of articles in journals. He has also read papers before various learned bodies.

He hopes to follow up the Rg vedic series with works on various subjects of social, political, religious and cultural interest, particularly, but not only, concerning Hinduism.

—N. MAHALINGAM